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# inside

Julian Cope: page 40



## features

- 16 **Mouse On Mars**  
Rob Young dismantles some German machine heads
- 18 **Linda Sharrock**  
Philip Watson cries freedom with an American voice in exile
- 20 **25 Years Of Bitches Brew**  
Joel Lewis examines the legacy of Miles Davis's 70s voodoo
- 28 **Jon Hassell: Miles And Me**  
The Fourth World auteur pays tribute to the dark magus
- 32 **Bill Laswell**  
David Toop meets the hardest working man in music
- 36 **Baaba Maal**  
Mark Hudson goes on safari with the Senegalese sound sculptor
- 40 **Julian Cope's History Of Krautrock**  
The strange and savage story of the Great Kosmische Musik



Bill Laswell: page 32

Miles Davis: page 20



## regulators

- 5 **Sounding Off**  
December: news, live events, TV and radio, plus Mr Bell Considers
- 9 **Letter From... Brazil**  
Sambas, drugs, violence and more in the hills of Rio de Janeiro
- 12 **Bites**  
DJ Shadow, The Golden Palominos, Gavin Bryars, O Yuki Conjugate
- 48 **Naked Eye**  
Richard Cook takes a gun to music's global villagers
- 67 **Subscribe**  
And grab a FREE CD of sonic brilliance from the Chill Out label
- 82 **Letters**  
Readers respond, rant, rail, etc.

## reviews

- 50 **Print Run**  
New music books: Henry Rollins, Lou Reed, Manu Dibango, industrial archaeology, and rocking the academy
- 53 **Multimedia Watch**  
Eno's *Headology*, Echo's *Sea Of Tranquility*, The ICA's Terminal Futures, and pop on the Net
- 54 **Soundcheck**  
Boldest, badiest, best (and now even bigger!) 26 pages of CD and album reviews



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THE OTHER SIDE.

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43-46 Poland Street  
London W1V 3DF, UK  
Tel: 071 439 6422  
Fax: 071 287 4767

Publisher  
**Adele Yarom**  
  
Editor  
**Tony Harrington**

Assistant Editor  
**Roh Young**

Art Editor  
**Doug Anarino**

Administrator  
**Roshmi Khannavir**

Subscriptions  
**Janine Puttock 071 734 3555**

Advertising  
**071 439 6422 ext 17**

Founder  
**Anthony Wood**

Chairman of the Namara Group  
**Naim Attallah**

Contributors  
**Sylvester Balazard, Jake Barnes, Clive Bell, Chris Blackford, Laura Connolly, John Corbett, David Elmer, Kodwo Eshun, Mark Espinosa, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Steve Holtje, David Ilie, Jakubowski, Rahma Khazam, Nick Kimberley, Biba Kopf, Art Lange, David Lebach, Howard Mandel, K Martin, Susan Masters, Will Montgomery, Dave Morrison, Brian Morton, Ian Penman, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Jonathan Romney, Richard Scott, Mark Sinker, Paul Stump, Julie Taraska, David Toop, Ben Watson, Nathan West, Barry Witherden, Robert Yates**

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Special thanks this issue to Georgina Brooke and Mick Houghlin

Compiled by  
**Rob Young**

News items  
should reach us by  
**Friday 2 December**  
for inclusion in the  
January issue



**Massive Attack** take their sound system out on the road this month, for — unbelievably — their first ever live UK dates. They're trying to create more of a blues dancehall vibe than just a straight gig, and there'll be a strong visual element with specially commissioned animations, slide projections of their own paintings, and giant figures. All shows will finish between 2 and 3 am, and special guests include The Mad Professor, Horace Andy, Nicolette, and Tackx. Dates as follows: Manchester Hacienda (5 December), Sheffield Leadmill (6), Glasgow Arches (8), Norwich UEA (9), Bristol Ashton House Mansions (10), Birmingham Gue Club (13), and London Gaietymore Club (14, 081 452 8652).

**Disobey** celebrate Yule on 1 December with performances from Dome, Spaceheads and a special guest QJ. It's at the usual venue Upstairs at the Garage in North London (071 278 2094, £6). On January 19-20 the party moves to New York for a two-day event at the Knitting Factory starring Band Of Susans, Einheit Brotzmann, Stewart Home and QJ Beekeeper. Check out page 39 for details of the latest exclusive Blast First/Wire offers.

**MC Solaar**, the French rap star, finally releases the UK version of his album *Prose Combat* this month, with three extra tracks, and plays at Clapham Grand, South London (071 738 9000) on 16 December.

**Gavin Bryars's** *The Sinking Of The Titanic*, released this month in a new recording on Point Records, is performed by the composer's Ensemble and with a light installation by Bill Culbert, at

London's Queen Elizabeth Hall (071 928 8800) on 6 December.

**The Electronic Lounge** this month features a live set from R&S artist Locust and QJing from Spykid. Drink, talk, look, listen at London's ICA, 6 December, £1.50. Info 071 498 3032.

**Quirky**, the experimental electronic music gathering at South London's Vox club (071 737 2095), has the following provisional December activities lined up: 2 December Zion Tram, Path, Zephyrus live, OJs Mark Shrimmon, KOOL and sound.

**Information 9** GPR Records night — Germ, Hi-Ryze live, OJs Coin Oale, Luke Slater, Beaumont Hannant. 16 Bedouin Ascent live, DJs Jeremy Simmonds, Luke Vibert. Every Friday 10 pm–6 am, price £6/£4 before 11 pm, £5 conics, £4 members

**Leo Records**, purveyors of outstanding new and improvised music (from Sun Ra to Russian kitchen implements), celebrate their 15th anniversary in 1995. Here's advance warning of a Leo Festival to be held on 3–4 January at the Purcell Room on London's South Bank, supported by *The Wire*. Featured artists include Tuvan throat-singer Sankho Namchiyak ('the spiritual third cousin of Diamanda Galas and Yma Sumac'), the UK debut of American saxophonist Ned Rothenberg, Russian pianist/composer Sergey Kuryokhin, Britain's excellent, energising Jon Lloyd Quartet, Vyacheslav Ganelin, and the duo of saxophonist Keshavan Maslak and pianist Katsuyuki Itakura, whose *Excuse Me, Mr Sato* CO is reviewed this issue. Tickets are £10 (£7 conics) per night; information on 071 928 8800. More details in the January issue.

**Double Image** include a world premiere in their 'Contrasts' show on 12 December at London's Purcell Room (071 928 8800) by upcoming Australian composer Sadie Harrison. The programme also includes Bartok, Martinu and Brahms. Tickets £9, £5 SD.

**The Fall Of Icarus** is the latest Michael Nyman project, in which he teams up with the inventive Belgian performance troupe Plan K. The work is inspired by Bruegel's famous painting, and is a live action/video son et lumiere swirl of sculpted feet, swirling clouds, snowstorms, cascades, sweeping landscapes, a map of the world, and an inferno. The Nyman Band perform the score. It runs for two nights, 2–3 December, at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, tickets £14, £12 and £10. Details on 071 928 8800.

**Do Tongues** is Brighton's weekly venue (Wednesdays 8 pm, at The Lift, above Pig In Paradise, Queens Road) for radical out-loud readings — past guests have included Kathy Acker, Lydia Lunch, Dennis Cooper and Al Kennedy. Jon Savage will be reading from *England's Dreaming* and previewing the forthcoming video of the book (3D November), and between 12–23 December they host a Christmas show, *This Year's Model*, featuring The Resident Alien Theatre Company. Melodrama, style and audience participation threatened. Information on 0273 702277.

**Ben Watson**, another recent Do Tongues guest, launches his new slim (but not at all slight) volume of poetry *Tumpeke Ruler* (Equape), by heading out on the road. Accompanied by bassist Simon Fell to perform his death-defying rendition of his life's work, the Zappa study *The Negative Dialectics*



*Of Poodle Play*, he'll be visible at Cambridge Jesus College (29 November, 8.30 pm), Manchester Offons Bookshop (30, 7 pm), and London Compendium Books (8 December, 7 pm).

**LFO and Autecore** end their joint UK tour with dates at Manchester Sankey's Soap Club, with DJ Mark Broom (29 November, 061 237 5606), and Sheffield Leadmill 28, 0742 754500), with Sabres Of Paradise live and DJ Andrew Weatherall.

**Tou**, percussive sampling sound excavators, release an album *All Our Ancestors* for Beyond this month, and play dates at London's Whin-Yag Club in East London (3 December) and Windsor Flying Pan (4).

**Time Recordings**, the people who brought you those wonderful Ernst CO compilations, join together with the N'Tone label for an evening of experimental electroacoustic music at the 13th Note club in Glasgow on 18 December. Woob and Journeyman play live and there'll be an eclectic sound mix throughout the evening. Call 041 339 3322 for details.

**John Martyn**, the legendary folk rock guitarist, plays an 'Unplugged' set on 3 December at Blackheath Concert Halls in South London, ring 081 436 0100 for details.

**Zap Mama**, the women's five-piece vocal group, play at the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank, supported by Tanika, on 17 December (071 928 8800, 7.30 pm). Pick up a free copy of their new album *Salsipolma* by subscribing to *The Wire* now — turn to page 67.

**Audio** is another new experimental live space, co-hosted by the splendid Too Pure label, for improvisations, litris, visuals and a sound roster of record spinners. The first night is 15 December, when Mark Van Hoan from Locust will be clashing with new OJ on the block, *Soylud*. The venue is the Russell Arms in North London (071 387 1495).

**Jazz Rumours**, at the Vortex in North London (071 254 6516) features gigs by Trevor Watts's More Music Trio (4 December), Elton Dean/Marcio Mattos Duo (11), and The Jon Lloyd Quartet (18). Entry is £4/£3.

**Ultramarine.** Pentatonik and Mouse On Mars are the featured artists at two Trance Europe Express all-night events this month. Emergency Broadcast Network,  $\mu$ -Ziq, Kineshesia and Node (Suede manager Ed Buller and producer Flood, London only) also appear, along with DJs from the Rephlex label and screenings of *JEX: The Movie*. Dates are Manchester Hacienda (1 December, 9 pm-4 am, £1D adv, D61 236 SD51), and London Forum (3, 9 pm-6 am, £12 adv, 071 284 2200).

**Megadog** stage a giant New Year's Eve party (31 December, 8 pm-6 am) at Brixton Academy in South London (D71 924 9999). Live appearances scheduled so far include LFO, The Grid, Eat Static, System 7,  $\mu$ -Ziq, The Source Experience, Dreadzone and Zion Train, and there'll be a huge line-up of DJs, circus performers and visuals. Tickets are £22.50 (advance) and £25 (door), from the venue or usual agents.

**Shady**, formerly of Mercury Rev, plays a special one-off date in the UK this month with a guest line-up including Main's Robert Hampton. It's at North London's Garage (9 December, D71 607 1818).

**The London Sinfonietta** perform orchestral works by Thomas Ades and five other composers in their twenties, with vibraphone solos by Evelyn Glennie, on 6 December. Then (9) they tackle four giants of the post-war avant garde: Boulez,

Xenakis, Kurtág and Ligeti. Both concerts are at London's Barbican (D71 638 8891).

**Pirate Jenny's** is a new musical cabaret night hosted by singer Des De Moor at North London's Vortex club (D71 254 6516). It opens on 5 December with performances from Kate Westbrook, The Lost Puppies, and some numbers from the vaillant Moor. B 3D pm start, and tickets are £4/£3.

**Resonance**, the organ of the London Musicians' Collective, has published a new issue featuring Siarnad Jones, Nicolas Collins, Bob Ostertag, Scratch Orchestra and more. Send £3 (£4 overseas) to LMC, 2nd Floor, Community Music House, 60 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3BP.

**Red Hot And Cool** (Channel Four, 2 December) features Pharoah Sanders, Digable Planets, Guru, MC Solar, The Pharcyde, etc. (all featured on the CD of the same name), live in New York raising money for AIDS awareness.

**Once Upon A Time In Cybersville** (Channel Four, 11 December 7 pm) Yea or nay to the Superhighway? *Equinox* reports.

#### Correction

In our obituary of John Stevens (The Wire 129), we referred to the Little Theatre as being located in Gerrard Street. It was, in fact, in St Martin's Lane, as every harsh-tongued Improv-head knows. □

## the office ambience

**Bitches Brew** — Miles Davis (Columbia)  
**Science, Art And Ritual** — Bedouin Ascent (Rising High)  
**All Our Ancestors** — Tuo (Beyond)  
**Then Comes The White Tiger** — Red Sun/Samu'Non (ECM)  
**Future Days** — Can (Spoon)  
**Firmament** — Man (Beggars Banquet)  
**Equator** — O Yuki Comjante (Staalpaal)  
**Mwandishi** — Herbie Hancock (Rhino)  
**Spanners** — Black Dog (Warp)  
**The Sultan's Picnic** — Rabih Abou-Khalil (Enja)  
**Nordic Gallery** — Edward Vesala/Sound And Fury (ECM)  
**Johnny In The Echo Chamber** — The Aggrovators (Attack)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

# Mr Bell Considers



PHOTO: GARDNER FORBES

I knew right away this was a classy recording studio: great heavy door of blond wood, probably hand built in Scandinavia, with a long narrow panel of smoked glass that you can peer through as you struggle with both arms to get the door open. I shut two fingers in this door within an hour of being there. As my fingernails turned dark blue, the engineer got down to work, and the first job was to figure out why the room was so baking hot when the air conditioning seemed to be on maximum.

It's a special moment, entering the mixing studio for the first time. I knew we would be more or less living there for almost two weeks, mixing for about 14 hours a day, unless something went wrong, in which case we'd have to do some overtime. It's wonderful in a way that so much effort and exhaustion goes into something as casual as pop music, it's like spending a week handcrafting a bubble.

A couple of things always go wrong on the first day of a mix. The main reverb packed up, the hired sampler arrived three hours late and then proceeded to reboot itself every five minutes, so we had to send it back. At 11 pm one of the monitor speakers gave up, or to be precise, we blew its tweeter. And after calling in the maintenance engineer we learned that the room was terribly hot because we had switched the air conditioning off.

I was still quite happy with the studio, however. There was a good ping-pong table in the live room. And the assistant engineer had blue hair. You had to look twice to be sure it wasn't the lighting. The assistant engineer comes with the studio, and has a big effect on the atmosphere. It can get very depressing if you suspect that he or she doesn't like your music. Anyway, this assistant was called Nick, and he used to design semiconductors for guided missile systems. We got on straight away. Though he kept bringing in fresh pots of tea every 20 minutes, and we had to beg him to stop doing that.

The best thing in the studio apart from the ping-pong table was the vast SSL mixing desk. SSL means it's fully programmable on a computer, so everything takes much longer, but it sounds brilliant at the end, if you're still awake. This desk is so advanced it can even insult you — if you program in an instruction which makes no sense, it writes something on the screen like "You can't do that you stupid blue-assed transwestite". Jolly amusing at 3 am. This insult facility is an option on the desk. Our engineer said, "I usually switch it off".

The big live room in the main studio was where we held our ping-pong tournaments. Through of course if someone was actually trying to record something in there, you had to leave, otherwise the sound of ping-pong balls would be all over their record. It was going to tell you about the day I had to stop playing ping-pong so that Apache Indian could record some vocals, but that's another (true) story. **CLIVE BELL**

# new notes at a glance information from SPNM

new notes, the monthly listings brochure published by SPNM, is an essential guide to what and who's happening in new music, specialising in the covered music circuit. Events listed in full in new notes also appear in these pages - we'll send you a free copy to sample what's on offer!  
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**1** London  
**Philharmonia Roald Dahl Concert**  
Arnold, Nberg RFF

**1** Sound International  
Cabrera, Ker, Lorraine, Campbell, Akane, Koh  
Ossler Gallery, WCI  
0171 831 1618

**2** English Chamber Orchestra  
Holger, Doris RFF

**2&3** PianK/Charleoi Dances and The Michael Nyman Band  
Nyman QEF

**3** New Frontiers  
Phelous, Stevenson, Edwards RFF

**\*4** Montague/Mead Piano Plus  
Michael Tippett Centre, Bath College of Higher Education

**4** New MusICA 4 (4), Arditi  
Anderson, Boulez, Donatoni, Barry, Scianno, Hopkins, Garuti JCA

**5** Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Schmittke, Prokofiev, Rachmaninov RFF

**5** Shiva Nova  
PR

**5** YCAT 10th Anniversary/EOS  
Toovey QEF

**6** Stowe/Spring  
Nono, Bono, Fox, Wilco, Mascini St Mary's Centre  
Cheser 051 794 3099

**6** Keith Burstein  
Burstein  
Conway Hall 0171 223 7365

**6** London Sinfonietta  
Adler, Johnson, Müller-Woland, Markham, Daniel, Anderson RFF

**6** Peter Dickinson 60th Birthday  
Berkeley, Dickinson, Parulnik, Sato, Mayerl, Gershwin, Berners, Ives PR

**6** Gavin Bryars: The Sinking of the Titanic  
The Gavin Bryars Ensemble  
QEF

**7** NFMS/ESSO Young Artists' Festival  
Messiaen, Martinu PR

**7** Continuum Ensemble  
Zimmermann, Willaschek  
Regent Hall, 275 Oxford St, W1  
01395 276196

**8** CSBO  
Schmittke  
Symphony Hall, Birmingham  
0121 212 3333

**8** Philharmonia  
Goldschmidt RFF  
0171 499 8567

**8** NFMS/ESSO Young Artists Festival  
Southrop, Watson, Britten, Bartok PR

**8** Opera North  
HK Gruber QEF

**9** London Sinfonietta  
Boulez, Xenakis, Kurtág, Ligeti RFF

**11** New MusICA 4 (4)/Cambridge New Music Players  
Korda JCA

**12** Double Image: Contrasts  
Carhart, Harrison PR

**14** CSBO  
MacMillan  
Symphony Hall, Birmingham  
0121 212 3333

**15** Julian Lloyd Webber, cello  
John Lenehan, piano  
Britten, MacMillan, Bennett, Scott WH

**21** The Snow Queen/Park Lane Group  
King QEF

KEY:  
\*4 SPNM event

\*\*\* World Première  
\*\* UK Première  
\* London Première

BH: Barbican Hall, Barbican Centre, EC2  
0171 638 8891  
BMIC: British Music Info Centre, 10 Stratford Place, W1  
0171 499 8567

ICA: Institute of Contemporary Arts 0171 930 3647

PR: Purcell Room, SE1  
0171 928 8800

QEF: Queen Elizabeth Hall, SE1 0171 928 8800

RFF: Royal Festival Hall, SE1 0171 928 8800  
WH: Wigmore Hall, W1  
0171 935 2141

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# letter from brazil

**A South American saga of kidnapped musicians,  
Uzi-toting drug lords and non-existent studios  
amid the slums and sambas of Rio de Janeiro.**



We're sitting in a studio called The Cheese Factory. The studio is owned by a man called Daniel Cheese. It is situated at the top of a hill in one of the less fashionable suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. Or rather it seems to be at the top of the hill — in fact it's only half way up. The road narrows, turns sharply left then carries on at an even steeper gradient than the original hill to somewhere beyond. Light brown Volkswagen vans (all identical) ascend and descend this second hill at regular intervals.

We are in Rio to record an album featuring a variety of indigenous Brazilian musics — batucada, capoeira, Brazilian jazz, rhythms such as forró and baiao — with a specially formed group containing some of the country's finest musicians. Three of us have made the trip from London. Angela Scott and myself from the Soul Jazz label, and Joe Davis, who is serving as our London-Rio liaison.

In the 60s, the Brazilian record industry thrived on the back of the huge worldwide sales for Brazilian music that followed in the wake of the bossa nova movement. But the popularity of bossa nova is long over, and the situation today is slightly different. The kind of music we have come to Rio to record does not equate with huge sales and there are only one or two major labels releasing products recorded in a small number of very expensive studios in Brazil.

The session details have been semi-worked out in advance. Most of the musicians have been contacted and have agreed to do the project and half the songs have already been arranged. But there have been a number of problems. We go to see the studio we'd booked from England. The owner, Junior, shows us around. The studio is beneath his house (which is beautiful) and looks out onto a swimming pool and a number of parrots, turtles and other exotic wildlife. On the way to the console room we go through a hallway about five feet by eight feet. The mixing desk seemed to sound OK so we ask if we can see the studio. "You've just walked through it — the drummer can go in there." And the bass, keyboards, percussionists, two singers, saxophonist, trombone and guitars? "Well, you see that gap between the mixing desk and the speakers." Junior has just received an award for writing the theme tune to *Vagabond* — Brazil's Eastenders — but his studio is useless for our purposes, which is how we end up at The Cheese Factory.

Sivuca, a legend of Brazilian music, up there with Hermeto Pascoal and Antão Moriera, is one of the featured artists on the album we are recording. He is worried when we meet him because his guitarist is two hours late. He says that the guitarist is very professional and never late which means that something must have happened to him. He tells us a story of the time he toured Latin America with some other Brazilian musicians in the 60s, and how in one country Tenório Jr, a pianist and composer, suddenly disappeared. Sivuca thinks he was mistakenly taken for an anti-government leader, kidnapped, thrown in prison and

later executed to save face once the initial mistake was realised. Luckily Sivuca's guitar player turns up five minutes later. We discuss the song he is going to compose for us. It's hard for Sivuca to understand the style of music we want, so he suggests writing two songs, and we can choose the one we prefer. This sounds like a good idea and we leave him to go to his rehearsal.

Four days later we turn up at his flat to listen to what we imagine will be a tape of the rehearsal. Instead we walk into the room and see his band sitting around the dining room table. "Hit it!" says Sivuca and we're given live acoustic versions of the two songs — the drummer playing his drumsticks on the table. When they finish playing Sivuca says, "So which one do you want?"

South of Ipanema is Leblon where Celia Vaz, another of our musicians, lives. She is a singer, guitarist and composer who studied under Pat Metheny. Halfway through the recording Celia is in her garage when four gunmen approach her, take her to her flat and hold her hostage while they rob the flat and then systematically go through half the other flats in her block.

Back at The Cheese Factory, Daniel is telling the story of the time he had to rescue some musicians from a machine-gun toting drug baron who had kidnapped them. The musicians in question had asked Daniel if he knew where they could buy some cocaine. The only dealer Daniel knew lived in the village at the top of the hill. (Well, he owns the village actually.) So Daniel told them they can go up the hill if they like, but warned them that at night he usually goes to sleep to the sound of gunfire coming from the village.

30 minutes later the phone rang and the drug dealer told Daniel he had to come up to the village to identify the musicians that he was holding hostage. When he reached the drug baron's house he saw the musicians looking scared stiff while the baron, holding an Uzi machine gun, ran up to greet him. Daniel and he are friends. Every favela (shanty town) in Rio has its own samba school who practice all year to compete in the music and dancing competitions at Carnival. Some of them record demo tapes and the winners get to make a record. Once a year the samba school from this favela record their demo at The Cheese Factory with Daniel as engineer. For the last two years they have won their section of the competition. When the demo has been recorded the drug dealer comes down to Daniel's studio and gives him the money for the studio time. He always pays and Daniel always accepts. Daniel is philosophical about his position — this studio and house have no locks on the doors, the only security is their mutual respect.

So Daniel identified the musicians as coming from his studio and they were released. "Ah Daniel! My friend!" said the drug baron. "This man has the best studio in Rio. You musicians are lucky to work with him." Everyone walked back to the small studio halfway down the hill.

**STUART BAKER** Brazil. The Album is released by Soul Jazz (through Vtal) on 28 November

# Christmas

## on a plate



**garbarek/brahm/hussain**  
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 — Q magazine

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"feeling good"

"an instant classic will leave you 'feeling good.'"  
—Rolling Stone



**bhaki mseleku**  
"timelessness"

"We love bhaki and his harmonica."  
—Jazz World



**various artists**  
"straight no chaser"

"a veritable treasure trove of delights"



**john scofield & pat metheny**  
"i can see your house from here"

"this is one you can't afford to miss."  
—Gramophone



**herbie hancock**  
"cantaloupe island"

"musical geniuswork is the word that springs  
to mind"  
—[Q] magazine



**MEGASTORES**

**music+video+games**

# bites

*"It feels good for a minute/All that showing and showing/All that screaming and moaning/But it all leads to nothing."* An angelic soprano sings of nihilism over an Ambient mix of liquid lead and rusty-spring rhythm guitars, a crawling bass and relentlessly slapped drums — contorted, yes, but tantalizing, hypnotizing, and in its own way, pure.

"Pure and This Is How It Feels, which came before it, are both pretty dark — reflective of my personality, I suppose," admits Anton Fier, drummer and producer/auteur, whose New York band **The Golden Palominos** has evolved since 1982 over seven albums from hyperkinetic, genre-busting jams to an *avant* rhythmic obsessions and brooding lyrical sensuality. "They're my most personal albums yet, about the interrelationships of spirituality and sexuality."

So the "pure" voices of Lon Conson and Lydia Kavanaugh, guitarists Knox Chandler, Bootsy Collins and Nicky Skopelitis, bassist Bill Laswell and keyboardist Amanda Kramer essentially follow Fier's directions? "I'm trying to bring improvisation and collaboration into the process, whether it sounds so or not. The personnel is the first thing I think about when I'm getting an album together, and I try to leave the possibilities open. Then the music develops itself. I mean, these records are about process, forms, people, energy, making something out of nothing. I'm trying to create something that never existed before, and can only be categorized by me and who I am."

"It's strictly rhythm-based, but it's not music that falls into a dance music category," he contends, citing the concept of rhythmic layering that characterized the original Palominos (which comprised Arto Lindsay, Jamaaladeen Tacuma and John Zorn, and later REM's Michael Stipe, Syd Straw and Jack Bruce, among others). "It's still real musicians playing real instruments. But it's not important to hear the individual. Pure isn't about virtuosity — a guitar solo would be gratuitous. The music works as sonic information to create one large, breathing entity."

And how is this entity given life in the studio? "The bass and drum tracks are improvised, then sampled, restructured and resequenced, to relate organic and inorganic processes. The song forms aren't fixed until the record is finally mixed. Everything's continuously transformed by whatever sonic information is added as we go along. Lon wrote all her lyrics, though I have editing power, to accept or reject. So it's a thin line: the words may be hers, but it's my vision. Nothing gets past me that I don't think works."

Spirituality and sexuality, or submission and control — what's distilled in *Pure* (which was recorded at Bill Laswell's Brooklyn studio) leaves a ring of late century resignation. Is that a New York state of mind? "I don't know if there is a New York scene or sound anymore," says Fier. "If there is, I'm not part of it and haven't been for a long time." **HOWARD MANDEL** *Pure* is out now on *Restless* (through *Vital*). A 12" promo, featuring *Bandulu* remixes of "No Skin", is also in circulation.

In 1992, **Gavin Bryars's** *Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet* was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize (it didn't win). The original version of the piece had appeared in 1975 as one half of the first releases on Brian Eno's *Obscure* label. Now, for his next album, Bryars has reworked *The Sinking Of The Titanic*, the composition that made up the second side of that early *Obscure*.

Bryars wrote *Titanic* in 1969. He started from the reports of eyewitnesses that the *Titanic's* band had played on as the ship sank on its maiden voyage in 1912. "The behaviour of the musicians who went down playing was, for me, extraordinary," he says. "The band had decided to make the last few minutes bearable for the doomed passengers."

Bryars conceived of a poetic piece that had the musicians continue to play as they sank to the bottom of the Atlantic two miles down. The



"I was told that 'Influx' was a combination of Ambient and HipHop. But at that point I hadn't heard an Ambient song, so how can that be?" "Influx" was the first UK transmission from the San Francisco minimalist **DJ Shadow**. Released earlier this year on the Mo Wax label, it was a mesmerizing 13 minute tour through labyrinthine breakbeats and disembodied dialogue, which covered its trail with a succession of false endings and dubbed-out signals. The track was an autonomous tribute to jazziness, minus the lip service, razzamatazz and self-conscious Blue Note samples that afflict so much UK jazz HipHop. "Influx" has been damned as a defining moment for Triphop, that mutant strain of HipHop that, at its best, valorizes the music's capacity for psychodrama and sonic disorientation over gangsta lyrics and macho posturing. But Shadow distances himself from the hysterical amount of coverage generated by the Triphop tag. For instance, he enthuses about his mixing work for the 'straight' HipHop group Blackalicious on their recent Mo Wax album *Melodico*. "We just did a show supporting A Tribe Called Quest. There was no space suits, lasers or crystal balls floating around."

Shadow came to HipHop relatively late. "I wish I could say I was into The Sugarhill Gang but I didn't get it then. For me, [Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five's 1982 track] 'The Message' was revolutionary." He says he soon became "fascinated with the music because of the edits and scratches", a fascination which paralleled his interest in "sound and sound effects, so-films and cartoons", and which still informs his penchant for "an overall effect, where words don't matter" (At one point he says, "Good as Juru The Domaya's *The Sun Rises In The East* is, I think it's a good example of great music being weighed down by its subject matter").

Shadow perfected his liking for salvaged soundbites, jump-cuts and scratch dementia on West Coast radio and a four track home studio, and he cites Star Wars composer John Williams as being as big an influence as Gang Starr's DJ Premier. The estranged mood of "Lost And Found", the follow up to "Influx", is more reminiscent of his favourite films, 2001 and Brazil, than a



resulting music, for strings and 'sound design', was a distorted siren song, peaceful and dangerously beguiling. "It has never been a closed piece," says Bryars. "It's like a volume, an open file of research data, and as new pieces of information on the Titanic come in, I can incorporate them."

When the wreck of the ship was discovered in 1985, Bryars reopened the research file and made a second (live) recording of the piece (for the Crepuscule label) in a Bourges water tower in 1990 with water dripping all over the electronic equipment. "Quite dangerous — we could have easily blown up."

The new *Titanic*, released on Philip Glass's Point label, is more densely structured, with greater depth (no pun intended) and resonance — and, says Bryars, it's "more human". What seems like a huge crash in the opening moments is not so much the collision with the iceberg as a series of survivors' descriptions of the sound, which Bryars has retranslated into an acoustic state. "For me, [the *Titanic*] has enormous mythic significance. You mention it to anyone and they know something of what happened. The ship was billed as unsinkable. The disaster is the end of optimism — that feeling that man has conquered everything, that industry and technology have made us masters of nature. We're not."

**LOUISE GRAY** The Sinking Of The Titanic is out now on Philip's Point. The Bryars Ensemble perform the piece on 6 December at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall (tel 071 928 8800). The original *Obscure* version will be reissued in the New Year by Virgin.

rap soundtrack. Its open-ended spaces and mad narrative sound like a warped collision of Acid rock and deep funk, with the spirit of The Butthole Surfers' Gibby Haynes in attendance.

January will see the release of Shadow's epic, 35 minute single "What Does His Soul Look Like?" The track pushes his taste for the abnormal to even weirder heights, a process which he sees as a natural evolutionary change for HipHop. With square pegs such as Shadow, Tricky, Earthling and New Kingdom still on the case, the future of HipHop seems joyously destabilised. **K MARTIN** "Lost And Found" is out now on Mo Wax.



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The latest word from the man-machine interface is that we are all cyborgs now, extending our biological capacities through intricate, intimate relationships with complex layers of technology, from artificial limbs to Internet ports. This year, a number of records have emerged which postulate that the next stage for Ambient music will represent both an extension and inversion of this relationship, destabilising the laws of digital processing via the introduction of organic sound sources, and the attendant illusion of random, out-of-control factors.

"People have done total computer music to death. We now need a rest period. Somebody called our music 'Techno-primitive', and I like that. Someone else called it 'Nature Music For People Who Don't Like Nature'."

The speaker is Andrew Hulme. Alongside Roger Horberry, Hulme is the one

constant factor in the floating pool of musicians who produce music under the name

## O Yuki Conjugate

The name first appeared in Nottingham in 1982. In the intervening 12 years the group have released just three albums. Seen in *Mirage*, into *Dark Water* and *Peyote*. "We work slowly," says Hulme. "The individual pieces of music are distilled and allowed to mature over time. If you sit on music in that way, it allows you to disassociate yourself from it and you become more objective. You can see what works and what doesn't."

A new album, *Equator*, produced by Paul Schutze and which was two years in the making, will be released later

this month on the Dutch Staatplaat label. You can place it alongside Schutze's own *The Surgery Of Touch* as one of the records of the year. Like that album, the music's humid, sticky atmospheres stimulate the listener into a vivid place of artifice, where insects swarm through abandoned steel sky-

scrapers, exotic fauna constructs around heavy machinery, and weather systems balloon into great billowing sheets of electronic texture.

"I'm interested in the conflict between melody and menace," says Hulme. "A lot of our music seems bright on the surface but underneath there's an air of something mysterious, something you can't focus on. That's what should draw people into the music, making those subliminal connections."

Various members of O Yuki Conjugate are involved in the side project, *A Small Good Thing*, whose recent *Slim Westerns* album similarly invited the listener to project themselves into imagined environments. "You can almost

picture the film to that album, the big landscapes. We like to use music as a springboard for the imagination. It's not background music, it's music you can engage in. The listener is the third point of the triangle, the foreground of the music, if you like, and they have to use their imagination to draw things out of it."

**TONY HERRINGTON** *Equator* is released later this month on Staatplaat, along with an EP featuring remixes by Paul Schutze, Robert Harrison and Shryku Thief. *Slim Westerns* is out now on Sokol Moon (all through Vitrol).





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How Mouse On Mars injected a virus into the machines

## systems analysts

The 90s offspring of Krautrock has much the same qualities as ever: at ease with the idea of configuring "pure" electronics into rock, and glowing embers that flare up into humour if you poke them hard enough. "[In German] 'Kraut' is a bit like upside-down; we like this expression 'Krautrock', because here we say, if your flat is in disorder it looks like Kraut and carrots," says Jan St Werner, one half of the German duo Mouse On Mars. He and his colleague Andi Toma first poked their noses out of their hole earlier this year, with two releases on the UK's Too Pure label: the "Frosch" EP, a lo-tech, post-Kraftwerk giddle of phlegmy synths, and the *Vulvaland* LP, where they oiled their music's rickety joints until they gleamed.

Mouse tracks are lush mini-adventures or sound movies in multiple dimensions: densely layered vertically, constantly changing horizontally in time, it's a fully articulated body of music. Werner is fully articulate to match — and giggle too, which dispels the notion that MOM are heartless, Kraftwerk-style studio boffins. "Our music is about research, in all kinds of directions," he says, speaking on the phone from a temporary base in Berlin. "We really like the moment of working with the equipment, it's like playing around, finding things, and new things coming out of these. And finally you have to do the arrange [mix], and when you do that you do the song, a pop song I would prefer to do no arrange — just present what we've done."

The pop element is, somewhat surprisingly, what the band hear in the defining Ambient records of Brian Eno, such as 1982's *On Land*. "Eno made the efforts of all the other people, the French tape and electroacoustic composers for example, available in a pop context. Not in the way of being playable on the radio, but music that has been collected for people who mainly agree to listen to pop music. It extended the meaning of pop, or the view of the pop audience. Sound is just sound, and everything you press on a record is the record. That's one of the main statements for me — thinking about hi-fi consciousness and what your ears expect from a record when you hear it. It has a lot to do with volume, frequency range, speed and expectation."

The individual equipment inventories now assembled by electronic musicians are like self-contained Smart systems — workshop, toolkit, and source of materials all in one. This forces new ways of thinking around the act of creation, experimenting to the point where man and machine vibrate in sympathy while remaining faithful to the original spirit of each component. In this way, seemingly disparate elements can more easily be recombined. To take one example: the Roland 303 Bassline. "Roland stopped producing it, because they realised that



nobody could do a realistic bass line with it," says Werner. "Then people found out that by sticking to the machine, using it in a different way, it became a hype again." With music as complex as Mouse On Mars's, isn't there a conflict between trying to keep the music fluid and the amount of intense programming required to put it all together? "It's an intense fluent thing, and it's about being really in what you do, and not that much about work, or thinking that much. Really being in there, and then you can't count the minutes or the seconds or the hours or the days you stay. It goes really quickly. We don't talk a lot, and if somebody doesn't like what the other has done, it's no problem to change it. It's much more heading forward than trying to preserve something."

And where are they heading? One of the dizziest tracks of the year is their "Maus Mobil", nestling on the *Trance Europe Express* 1993 compilation: a deranged rollercoaster of stop-start jungle rhythms, asymmetrical shards of growling distortion, a decent narrative with no Leitmotif. What possessed them? "I did not like it at all before, and now I really do because it's torn apart, you don't really know what it's about, when you think it's about to start, it stops. I'm really looking forward to being in the studio with Andi again, we really see an energy. We hope to use more instruments, and have a less expectable way of working with electronic equipment or working in a quantised way."

I ask Jan to idealize a perfect music making machine, but he already perceives a workable system in place. "A system is a machine, in a way, even our state is a machine, it just depends on how abstract you think things are. When you do music, you work with a lot of people — all these Japanese designers who created your Roland keyboard, all these electronic people from early this century in Europe making and developing all these small electronic parts you have. And then you work with all kinds of designers, the cable industry, and the people who make all your stuff. We just combine the stuff, I think that's really enough." **ROB YOUNG**

*Mouse On Mars play the UK in December as part of the Trance Europe Express tour. See Sounding Off for details.*





# exile's song

How Linda Sharrock went from

60s sonic warrior to 90s Seoul singer



"This place is a bit awful, isn't it," says Linda Sharrock, looking around the plastic plushness of London's Plaza On Hyde Park hotel. "It's full of Americans — and they're so loud."

It's a measure of how Europeanised she has become that vocalist Sharrock — once one of the loudest Americans on the free jazz scene in the late 60s — can make a comment like this without a hint of irony. She has lived in Europe — mostly in one of its quietest cities, Vienna — since 1983 and says: "The only way I would go back to the States now would be if I won the lottery — which is what you'd need."

Sharrock has covered a lot of ground since she left New York at the end of the 70s. By that time, with her guitarist husband, the late Sonny Sharrock, she had for 11 years been at the epicentre of the Lower East Side 'New Thing', the avant garde community of musicians who blew a hole through black music by taking giant leaps into unheard-of areas of improvisation, energy and intensity. After her divorce from Sonny she left America to explore other musical directions and in addition to Vienna she has lived and worked in all manner of settings in such places as Istanbul, Korea, Bangkok and London. She even gave up singing altogether ("not singing a note") for a couple of years in the 80s.

She was born Linda Chambers and grew up in a musical community — singing, inevitably, in her local church and school choirs — in a musical city, Philadelphia. She moved to New York when she was 17 to study painting at the Arts Students League, but after just two weeks abandoned her studies. She had met Sonny Sharrock, nine years her elder.

"I sneaked into this club on the Lower East Side, and on stage was Sonny and Pharoah [Sanders] and Mifford Graves," she says. "Sonny was doing something that I had never heard and it was like 'Wow! You know? So I just went up there and asked if I could sit in. That was the start of my career, and three weeks later Sonny and I got married.'"

She moved in to Sonny's flat on 3rd Street. Living around them were the sonic warriors of the 60s jazz revolution. Across the hall was Byard Lancaster, upstairs Dave Burrell. Sun Ra lived across the street, Pharoah Sanders around the corner, Marion Brown a couple of blocks over. She began singing in groups with Sanders, Graves, Joe Bonner, Sione and others, and co-led Sonny's ensembles including The Band Of Outlaws and Band Of Savages. She toured with Sonny in flautist Herbie Mann's critically underrated fusion groups. And, again with Sonny, she recorded some of the most uncompromising albums of the era — *Black Woman* (1969), *Monkey-Pocke-Boo* (1974) and *Bird Of Paradise* (1975) — landmark records of Herculean power on which Linda Sharrock's was always the loudest cry.

"Back in the 60s and early 70s, we thought we were going to achieve racial equality through self-expression, and eventually receive recognition for our abilities on the same level as other people. Usually, live, Sonny would tear all his strings and many times by the end of the set he'd be playing with only two left and I would have to scream because everyone else was playing so loud. Even in the circle we were involved in, we were considered 'out'. They would say, 'Oh, here come those Sharrocks!'"

She split up from Sonny, she says, primarily because of musical differences. "We just grew apart musically and both of us being the kind of people we are, there's no way we could have remained married. It was like a 24 hour thing for us — being married and the music and everything was connected."

Moving to Istanbul (because her best girlfriend came from there), she moved from obscurity to relative stardom, working with one of Turkey's most popular singers of the day. "It was an enormous show with 45 musicians. We had to have police guards — she was like the Madonna of Turkey."

She eventually moved to Austria — almost on a whim — becoming part of Vienna's improv community and working with saxophonist and Vienna Art Orchestra co-founder Wolfgang Puschig. The collaboration has echoed her time with Sonny Sharrock in that they have formed various groups together, including The Pat Brothers (whose album, *No 7*, is one of the great one-off records of the 80s), AM4 and Red Sun with Jamaaladeen Tacuma. They have also married.

She has two new records out this month. The first, *Like A River* (Amadeo), is a London-based project produced by former Loose Ties trombonist Ashley Slater. It's a wifely (occasionally too wifely) eclectic mix of jazz, Indo-funk, soul-pop, country blues, even something closer to Dadaist cabaret. But if the production seems at times too schizophrenic, Sharrock's dense, remarkably versatile vocals serve as the one unifying force, infusing the album with adonodal blues slurs, breathy, soaring, torch-soul dramatics and all manner of calis, cries and whispers.

The second release is *Then Comes The White Tiger* (ECM), the second album to be realised from an ongoing collaboration between Red Sun and the Korean master percussion ensemble SamulNori. Recorded in Seoul, the collaboration has been built up over seven years and relies on musical communication alone — neither group speak each other's language. The result is a thunderous free association of near-Test Dept reverberations, freeform alto flights, hamulodic bass and guitar work and expressionistic vocals interspersed with quieter, more peaceful vocal and flute laments.

"I'm interested in a lot of different things and I have to experiment with different combinations," she explains. "The most important thing is to express what you're feeling inside — and accept the consequences. That kind of liberation has slipped away from many people, it hasn't slipped away from me. That is Sonny's gift to me." **PHILIP WATSON**

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**"Things will never be the same again," wrote Ralph Gleason after hearing Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*. On the 25th anniversary of its**

**release, Joel Lewis examines the legacy of one of the most controversial albums of all, and speaks to its producer Teo Macero, while on page 28, Jon Hassell writes about how the album helped pave the way for his own revolutionary music.**

# running the voodoo down



PHOTO: DAVID BLOOMBERG

Gleason's uncaptialized liner notes referred to a whole musical history I was unaware of. And then there was the picture of Miles and producer Teo Macero. "Christ!" I thought. "These guys look old enough to be my father!" (They were.)

25 years ago, the release of *Bitches Brew* launched a rescue operation that halted jazz's ten-year decline in America. More than that, it initiated a new sonic dimension where jazz-based improvisation, rock dynamics, post-Darmstadt electronics, studio experimentation and elements of African and Asian folk forms could co-exist. However, and at least in terms of jazz's subsequent direction, there is a question who won the war of public taste. 25 years later the young musicians who began their music lessons under the influence of, for instance, Jack Johnson have grown up to have names like Wynton Marsalis and Terrence Blanchard and have their own campaign to save jazz from being 'corrupted' by external stimuli. And the fusion music that historically claims *Bitches Brew* as a touchstone is as problematic as Wynton Marsalis's 'Golden Age Of Jazz' nostalgia. Fusion groups and individuals such as David Benoit, Majee, Spyro Gyra and others have created a genre that has little to do with the jazz mainstream, and even less to do with the myriad possibilities suggested by the music on *Bitches Brew* — in New York City they are played on a station that advertises itself as "the home of live jazz".

The same claim could not be made for Miles Davis's music between the years of 1970 and 1975. Not since the days of Albert Ayler's and Archie Shepp's mid-60s ensembles had jazz (if you could still call it that) been so alienating and uncompromising. In the 50s, Davis was notorious for physically turning his back on the audience during live performances; in his guitar-based groups of 73-75, it appeared that the music itself rejected the presence of any outside listener.

In 1994, when the jazz mainstream has calcified into an unremittably dull and moribund space, it appears that the new

I purchased my first FM band radio in August 1969, the week before the original Woodstock Festival. I was 14 years old and the radio was a cheap \$20 from a discount store at a New Jersey shopping mall. With an FM tuner in my possession, I was able to tune into such 'underground' stations as WNEW FM, and received a mind-warping experience. If Woodstock accomplished anything tangible, it demonstrated that there was an audience for music which had previously been considered marginal and experimental. The FM band was now filled with the sounds of exotica: The Mothers of Invention, The Incredible String Band, Blodwyn Pig, The Nice.

One night months later, on a show hosted by a black DJ named Rosko, I heard something completely unprecedented. Rosko played mostly black-orientated progressive rock — Jimi Hendrix, The Chamber Brothers, Arthur Lee — and often interrupted the music with despatches from the Vietnam War, but this was something else. It was instrumental music with a trumpet replacing the usual guitar as the lead instrument. And it was as lengthy as Iron Butterfly's oft-played "Inna-Gadda-Da-Vidda". The music seemed almost shapeless and lacked the baroque strum and drang of progressive rock. At the end of the track, Rosko announced, "That was Miles Davis, 'Spanish Key', from his new album *Bitches Brew*." Then a segue into a soft drink advert. I made a note to find this album the next day.

When I bought the album, the whole packaging concept scared the hell out of me. "White boy! Precede at your own risk!" it seemed to proclaim. The cover painting by Mati Klarwein was out there. Ralph

**“In the 70s,  
Davis was  
making music  
for an  
audience  
that didn’t exist.”**

PHOTO: DAVID BECKWITH/RETNA



direction that Davis inaugurated with *Bitches Brew* has become as much of a musical *cui-dé-sac* as Stan Kenton's concert music and the Third Stream jazz of the early 60s. Even Davis himself rejected this music when he came out of his five year "retirement" in 1981. Latter-day albums such as *You're Under Arrest* and *Tutu* were meticulously planned executive exercises, musically sparse and calculated to reinforce Davis's standing as a major player — up there with Prince and Quincy Jones — in the global pop pantheon.

The Miles Davis that made *Bitches Brew* was in a different place altogether. The amount of music he made in this period (1969-75) is staggering — over 20 sides of music were officially issued (most releases were double albums), with numerous bootleg recordings also in circulation and many studio recordings still awaiting release. Beyond the quantity of recordings is the sheer scope of the music. Stylistically it ranges from the episodes of free jazz on *Live At Fillmore East*, to the stars, tablas and cyclical funk of *On The Corner* and the crushing one chord black rock jams of *Agharta*. No musician, outside of Duke Ellington, was as determined to extend the vocabulary and definition of black music. However, it took Ellington 50 years to present his theses, while every album by Davis in this period launched out in a new direction.

Some critics see the origins of *Bitches Brew* in a track on 1965's ESP album called "Eighty One", which featured traces of a rock-derived rhythm — and which actually caused some controversy at the time. *Bitches Brew*, however, is really not about rock and soul rhythms — rather, it represents a progression in Davis's ongoing rejection of jazz

conventions and Western traditions of organising music.

Although the Miles Davis Quintet of the mid-60s is accorded "classic" status in jazz histories, the group was far from a commercial success. Album sales were minimal and live audiences were beginning to dwindle by the late 60s. As evidenced by the 1965 live recordings at Chicago's Plugged Nickel, the group were nightly deconstructing the small number of standards that Davis had been using since the late 50s. Melodies were barely stated and solos were often unrelated to the melody, time signatures and tempos changed wildly and, as a result, the tunes often bore faint resemblance to the studio versions that fans based their judgments upon.

By 1967, the Quintet had abandoned individual tunes for unbroken live sets consisting of a sequence of often unconnected melodies. In the studio, Davis was also expanding the definition of what constituted jazz. In the Quintet version, the classic Wayne Shorter composition "Neferiti" has no conventional solos — instead the theme was repeated throughout the eight minute performance with different nuances. In general, Shorter's compositions of the period were as radical as those of Ornette Coleman. His pieces broke from the blues and the 32 bar song form that constituted the base of jazz composition and offered up minimal melodies that gave remarkable freedom to the improviser.

In *A Silent Way*, recorded six months before *Bitches Brew*, is often seen as a prelude to Davis's music of the 70s. With a quarter of a century of hindsight, the album seems more related to the various Davis/Gil Evans collaborations of the 50s than the activities of the Quintet. "This one will scare the shit out of them!" Davis told critic Don Heckman and, indeed, many fans and critics were shocked — mostly by the use of the electric piano, the length of the two side-long compositions and the rockist elements of John McLaughlin's guitar playing. What was missed at the time was Davis's lyrical trumpet playing and the conventional use of time signature, tempo and harmony. Unlike the often ragged nature of albums such as *Miles Smiles*, *In A Silent Way* was a 'big' production much in the manner of *Sketches Of Spain*. Hearing it today, it's hard to overlook the nostalgic mood of the album — Davis almost seems to be revisiting the 'walking on eggshells' sound that had established his enormous popularity in the 40s and 50s.

With the availability of live recordings and previously unreleased studio sessions, it becomes more apparent that *Bitches Brew* is both a transitional recording as well as a summation of some



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of the experiments that Davis had been working with since the mid-60s. He had been using multiple keyboards since at least November 1968. In 1967, he recorded "Circle In The Round" with Joe Beck, a wildly popular studio guitarist who was comfortable in both rock and jazz idioms. Ron Carter was using bass guitar (as opposed to double bass) throughout *Filles De Kilimanjaro* and Davis was experimenting with two bass players on late 1968 tracks that were eventually issued on *Water Babies*.

On 19, 20 and 21 August 1969, a large contingent of musicians, along with producer Teo Macero, assembled at Columbia's 52nd Street studios in Manhattan to record the music that would be released as *Bitches Brew*. At the core was his working unit of Chick Corea (piano), Dave Holland (bass), Wayne Shorter (soprano saxophone), and drummer Jack DeJohnette. The other musicians brought varied histories: ex-Cannonball Adderley pianist Joe Zawinul contributed his composition "Pharaoh's Dance" and had spent a good deal of time in the studio with Davis over the last year. Lenny White and Don Alias were two young drummers with a handful of playing credits between them — their presence on the session would inaugurate Davis's increasing custom of hiring very young and very raw musicians to work in his groups. Pianist Larry Young was better known as the organist in Tony Williams Lifetime. John McLaughlin held the guitar chair in Lifetime and his work on *In A Silent Way* made him one of the new stars on his instrument. Bassist Harvey Brooks, like Joe Beck, was a first-call studio musician who worked with producer/performer Al Kooper. Little is known about percussionist Jim Riley, though he did tour with Davis in 1971 and one bootleg recording identifies "Jim Riley" as Jimma Santos, who was a close musical associate of Jimi Hendrix in the last two years of his life and part of his Woodstock band.

In his autobiography Davis suggests that the *Bitches Brew* sessions were "just like one of them old-time jam sessions we used to have up at Minton's back in the old bebop days." He also suggests that most of the material was introduced to the musicians at the sessions, but during a summer 69 tour of Europe Davis was performing versions of the title track and "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down", "Spanish Key" and "Sanctuary" (which was actually recorded at a November 68 session).

Also in dispute is who should get the credit for the finished product of these sessions. Davis, again from his autobiography, is fairly emphatic on the subject: "Some people have written that doing *Bitches Brew* was Clive Davis's [the Columbia Records president of the period] or Teo Macero's idea. That's a lie, because they didn't have nothing to do with none of it. Again, it was white people trying to give credit to other white people where it wasn't deserved because the record became a breakthrough concept, very innovative."

Objecting to this Miles-eye view is Macero himself, although he readily concedes that the original concept and the choice of personnel were Davis's. "Miles would send me little snippets of tapes from rehearsals," Macero told me in a recent phone interview, "and I'd say 'I like that' or 'that sounds good' and then we would go to the studio to try to work it out."

However, in response to Miles's lack of credit or mention in his autobiography, Macero is rather emphatic about his role in *Bitches Brew*. "If you heard the raw tapes of the sessions you'd realize that all those effects, those echoes, the way the things were pieced together were done by me, not Miles. The electronics and the electric pianos were my suggestions and we got those things for free through Columbia. Miles always wanted to take credit for everything — on a lot of albums he didn't want the names of the musicians on the cover. You know, he'd walk into the session, play, then walk out. In the 26 or 28 years we worked together he maybe came to the editing room five or six times. He never saw the work that had to be done on those tapes. I'd have to work on those tapes for four to five weeks to make them sound right."

What is significant about *Bitches Brew* is how much it is a result of the editing process rather than a documentation of real time improvisation and performance. "I had carte blanche to work with the material," says Macero about his working relationship with Davis. "I could move anything around and what I would do is to record everything, right from beginning to end, mix it all down and then take all those tapes back to the editing room and listen to them and say, 'This is a good little piece here, this matches with that, put this here,' etc., and then add in all the effects — electronics, the delays and overlays. A lot of the stuff we used on *Bitches Brew* was invented for us by CBS technicians and was widely



imitated for years after."

In remembering the sessions, Macero notes: "I don't think Miles ever made a complete take on any of the tracks on *Bitches Brew*. He would be working it out in the studio and take it back and re-edit it — front to back, back to front and the middle somewhere else and make it into a piece. I was a madman in the engineering room. Right after I'd put it together I'd send it to Miles and ask, 'How do you like it?' And he used to say, 'That's fine,' or 'That's OK,' or 'I thought you'd do that.' But the construction of the pieces was really done in the editing room and not the recordings."

What Macero brought to *Bitches Brew* was more than technical skill in the editing room. Macero was a Juilliard-trained composer who was connected with the Third Stream jazz/classical crossover movement of the 50s. Critic Harvey Parker, in a recent essay in *The Village Voice*, notes how advanced Macero was in the 50s. Of particular note is a 1955 Columbia album called *What's New*



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## Mati Klarwein and that cover. .

Mati Klarwein's cover for *Bitches Brew* is deservedly one of the most famous covers on any record. Unfortunately, those who have only seen the CD version of the record will miss the impact of the original wrap-around sleeve. Like Reid Miles's best covers for Blue Note, it is a visual parallel to the vinyl within. Visionary, mysterious and alchemically African, it breaks with the hipster-literate tradition of Davis sleeves of the 50s and early 60s that were done in-house at Columbia.

Klarwein, an Israeli-born artist, who also did the sleeves for *Live Evil* and Santana's *Abraxas*, as well as albums by Jon Hassell and The Buddy Miles Express, was commissioned by Davis himself to do the cover for *Bitches Brew*. In a catalogue of work from this period, Klarwein recounts visiting Davis at his home and being played the music for the forthcoming record.

"Miles's voice sounds like someone sweeping dead leaves in the courtyard. He is putting a reel of tape of his forthcoming *Bitches Brew* album — that he wants me to paint a cover for — into the stereo tape deck.

"They can only dig a nigger if he's made it big"

"That's better than not digging him at all

"No, Mati," he snarls at me, "that's worse! A racist is a challenge and a challenge is a turn-on. But a bitch make me run the other way."

I spoke to Klarwein by phone at his current home in Majorca, Spain. He said that the original art work for *Bitches Brew* was sold to an art collector in Morocco who owned 15 other Klarwein pieces. "A few years ago," he said, "his house was burglarized and the *Bitches Brew* art was one of the things that was stolen. Its whereabouts are still unknown." □

which used a lot of the techniques — such as overlaying solos, electronic sounds and strange echoes — that would appear on *Bitches Brew* 14 years later. Although Macero produced over 25 artists at Columbia — an eclectic group that ranged from Duke Ellington to The Harmonics — he was very conversant with what was going on in contemporary classical music. "Varèse, Stockhausen and Seravinsky," he says, "it was all familiar stuff."

In refiguring those raw tapes, Macero realized the first inklings of what Jon Hassell would call "coffee-coloured classical music." Jazz-centred critics such as Jack Chambers would complain of the long stretches of *Bitches Brew* where "nothing happened"; that is, the absence of solos. But in Stockhausen's notion of music as process, all of the music is "happening." *Bitches Brew* shatters the bipolarity of jazz that leads to a fetishization of improvisation over the music as a form. It was perhaps the lack of resolution on *Bitches Brew* that many old fans had trouble dealing with, on most of the tracks, solos rise out of the matrix of sound and sink back into the mix. To appreciate the 27 minute long title track fully, one had to throw away one's expectation and/or definition of jazz and let the piece define its own process. "You listen to those pieces," Macero says, "and you realize there's not much form — you'd have to be a genius to figure out that form. It's all cut in and cut out. It's one giant through-composed piece like Chopin."

Although *Bitches Brew* eventually sold in excess of 600,000 copies, qualifying it for gold album status, it is hard to gauge the popularity of Davis's subsequent recordings. The difficulty of the later music and the length of the tracks on, for instance, *Jack Johnson*, *Live Evil* and *Live At Fillmore East* often kept the music off the playlists of even the most progressive radio stations. And Columbia would encourage large record store chains to order heavily promoted albums in large quantities — with the unsold albums returned to the warehouse never deducted from the overall sales.

Were these anti-commercial post-*Bitches Brew* albums Davis's response to charges that he had sold out to white hippies? The kids who went to the Fillmore East hoping to hear him replicate the tracks on *Bitches Brew* — based on their expectations and the habits of rock bands, circa 1970 — must have been severely shocked listening to the band that featured Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea. The "trendy," "black is beautiful" Corky McCoy cartoons on the cover of *On The Corner* mask the intensely dark and abstract music of that album. Outside of Bob Dylan, no other commercially viable artist had gone so far to distance himself from his fanbase. By the time Davis recorded *Agharta* and *Pangaea* in 1975 (recordings that were vilified in their day), he'd stood the jazz paradigms on their head. In Davis's universe, jazz was neither a voice for the oppressed nor a cry of freedom — it was a score for an unwritten and unstaged play about alienation.

At this moment, Davis was playing music for an audience that didn't exist. Few of his old fans followed him into the vortex of his new music — in fact, he'd lost most of them years before with the Williams/Shorter Quintet. And rock fans, used to strict song form and structure, were often bewildered and clueless as to what Davis's music was about. And for some odd reason, on concert bills the Davis group was often paired with acts whose fans were least likely to connect with the music — Laura Nyro, Steve Miller and Crosby, Stills, Nash And Young. Few attempts were made to match him with some of the more adventurous white groups of the period, such as The Mothers Of Invention, Traffic or The Grateful Dead.

(Continued on page 79)

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PHOTO ANDY FLOO

# forbidden fruit

**Jon Hassell** explains how he was lost and found in the luxuriant jungle of *Bitches Brew*

There's something I keep saying about how important it is to remember that flowers are the sexual organs of plants. What I'm usually trying to say is, what could be more 'spiritual' than the evanescent erotic beauty of, say, stockings or lacy underwear as floral-like decoration surrounding the profound mating dance which leads to us being here. Thinking of things this way cultivates an appreciation of art in which false (read 'verbal') contradictions are resolved. Man-made 'opposites' like 'sacred' and 'profane' go to bed together and make divine little goddesses who remind us that Nature doesn't speak in words. Goddesses become 'witches' (those who hadn't lost contact with the pre-verbal world). Witches become 'bitches' (those whose 'animal' instincts tend to overrun social contracts).

The lush Fender Rhodes piano chords and their melodic outlines being tossed around in secret games within the luxuriant jungle of *Bitches Brew* are like so many dark blossoms and dangling vines to me — vines which I found myself clinging to for dear life around 1971, swinging across the chasm of an impending compositional career in what later came to be called 'minimalism' — a genre of music which seemed to arm at the ears and head and not much of the rest of the body. This is that North/South thing — whether within the body or the body politic — whose attempts at resolution I later came to call Fourth World. Thank Goddess you were there, Miles. This music — as all great art must — extended the vocabulary of my imagination. I could dream and fantasize in a way that I couldn't before.

And it made me pick up my horn again and start to think about how I might try to resolve another set of 'opposites' that had been handed down: the composer/performer dichotomy — with music as preconceived text, to be read later (as in nearly all Western classical music), or music as response to the moment (as in jazz and nearly all non-Western musics). This polarity came into high relief a year or two later when I began to study Indian raga — a form in which these elements are perfectly merged — with the great vocal master Pandit Pran Nath. This is, of course, an equation with many possible solutions. Think of Duke Ellington. And Miles (who loved him madly) who continued the evolution of a music which, in its elegant balance

between structure and improvisation, became truly 'classical' in the global sense of that word, ie equal attention to 'then' and 'now', to 'North' (above the waist, electric keyboards) and 'South' (below the waist, drums).

Just as some tribal people have sacred instruments which are kept in a special place and only brought out once a year to be played so that the potency of the sound isn't squandered (the flip side of the 'Ambient' idea?), I've always reserved my immersion in powerful music like *Bitches Brew* for special times. This was also something of a survival technique since I knew this was an atmosphere in which I could get too lost and I knew there was no way to follow this act.

I doubt that *Bitches Brew* would sound exactly the same to me without the intense, florid beauty of Mat Klumlein's cover painting which seem so intrinsically one with the music as to have crystallised in a 'flash of the spirit' (cf Robert Farris Thompson's book of the same name) when both were born at the same moment. His universe of imagery struck such resonant chords within me about the unity of 'sacred' and 'profane' that I could easily imagine all of my music having been attempts to illustrate that world. (It's been my good fortune to count him among my closest friends for many years now and three of my records are graced with his work.)

Honoured at being asked to reflect on how the music that came out of those three probably hot and humid days of a New York August have resonated in my life, I found a few threads whose intertwining suggests a nice coda pattern in our kente cloth of connections.

Look no further than the cover painting for the perfect reminder of flowers as sexual strategies. The beautiful blossom at lower left, among whose pink petals and folds one can find feminine essence galore, morphs skyward into fire and water and decorated bodies in an ecstatic snapshot of the cycle of Nature. This is the ceiling of my kind of Sistine Chapel. And I know it was Miles's land too. Mat had, in fact, a stunning walk-in 'chapel' (his title) composed of paintings of even more deeply erotic/spiritual iconography, and he told me Miles had been enchanted by it and had almost bought the whole thing.

Finally, a little 'musical iconography' check out the first John McLaughlin guitar bend on 'Miles Runs The Voodoo Down', then listen to track 12 on my latest record, *Dressing For Pleasure* — the one titled 'Mat' that has the deconstructed licks of a chorus of African... shall we say... 'witches'? □

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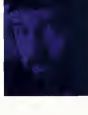
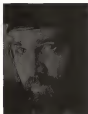
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Laswell was there for the birth of hip hop, Afrika Bambaata, Fab 5 Freddy, Phase II, Grand Master, they've all been touched by Laswell's presence. When Herbie Hancock teamed up with Gambian griot Foday Musa Suso it was Laswell who oversaw the endeavor. And again when Herbie Hancock delivered 'Future Shock' it was Laswell who was ultimately responsible. Material, Praxis and Last Exit were formed of characters like George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, Buckethead, Bernie Worrell, Sly and Robbie among others under the guidance of Laswell wielding these sonic aberrations for but a brief moment as time and space before returning to nothingness. Historical recordings by The Master Musicians of Jajouka as well as music from Marc Strech and Gamble have been overseen by the aural sorcerer, Laswell. In a world plagued by the plastic sounds of commercial music, Bill Laswell has become the omnipotent purveyor of real music."<sup>TM</sup>

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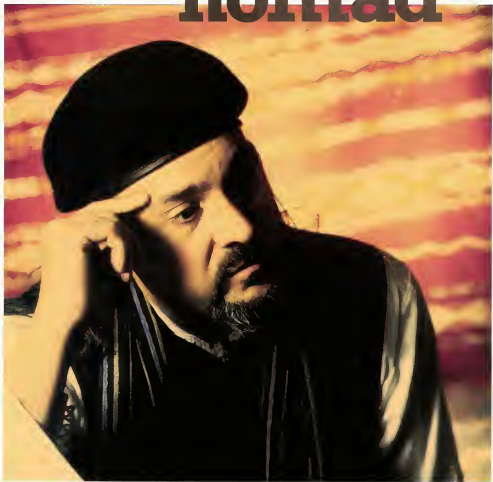


Axiom and The Wire

\*NURD MAGAZINE



# telematic nomad





s,  
ias  
trail

across continents, genres,  
moods, atmospheres and  
numerous collaborations. David  
Toop met him in Paris to hear  
about hidden webs, dark  
trances and the whooping  
sounds of alarm.



out all the stops," he says. "I've got some back catalogue."

In Paris he is spreading some good news of the current labels which carry his projects: Axiom, Black Arc and Subharmonic. "I'm pretty spaced most of the time as far as communicating. I'm thinking about doing stuff all the time. I reserve the more clarified statements for the business side, usually."

The business side and making music happen: 1978 Zu Place, a Manhattan club for New Music run by Giorgio Gomelsky (manager — Rolling Stones, Yardbirds, Soft Machine, Gong, Magma, etc.) Living upstairs on the second floor with Gomelsky's two dogs is Bill Laswell, helping to organise concerts, making

filers, learning the runnings. If you walked to the room had no back wall. Behind the curtain, black night and the whooping sounds of alarm.

"The classic thing about that place was we always made a lot of noise but the sound was only coming out of the back. One day some people came there and they said, 'Giorgio, it's really bad news, they're building a school right behind you.' He said, 'Oh fuck, I have to find out what's going on.' So he was gone for a long time and he came back with a bottle of wine, he was really happy. I said, 'What's going on?' He said, 'Man, it's incredible. It's a school for the deaf!'"

A telephone meeting is arranged for six pm with Jean Georgakarakos, notorious owner of Celluloid (early issues of Laswell's Material) and BYG (French 60 album series, mostly American free jazz recorded in late 1960s). "According to history, only Anthony Braxton and Alan Silva got paid!" He says he's importing mice, says the go-between "He's going to jail is what he's doing," laughs Laswell.

Hustlers and players? That's (Zu Place) where I met Karakos. He'd just come out of BYG. That was a trip. I learned a lot about... well, bootlegging, I guess. And just the weird things that go on in business. They'd say, "Do you have a copy of Magma's *Kohintarkos*?" I'd say, "Yeah, I have vinyl copies of that but it's not in great condition." They would go across the street and put it on two-track, you can hear the vinyl popping, and then they would come back and they would have the master and write the name on it. I would say, "Oh, that's it!"

Teleomatic nomads. Soon to New York, then Kansas, but here now in Paris, direct from Pete Namlook's studio in Frankfurt where the fruits of another trip are absorbed into the retrieval system. "I actually went to Mongolia two months ago. I had a big tour from the Japan Foundation. It was all Japanese traditional and classical and jazz musicians and musicians from West Africa and America. The idea was to travel, create a film, a CD, and collaborate with musicians from these areas. In some

A quiet courtyard in St Germain. Leaves flutter down the face of a high wall of ivy, falling in scrapes and whispers into a stone water basin at the wall's foot. A bird, or maybe a dropping twig, splashes loudly. Muted evidence of a vacuum cleaner, bursts of heavy metal construction work. Warm sun for Autumn but the duration of this two hour conversation is determined by a gradual drop in temperature.

Black beret, long hair, some streaks of white now, matted dreadlocks at the back. "This is the longest year I've ever experienced," says Bill Laswell, "and it's not yet over." Between last Christmas and now more than 30 albums of productions and/or collaborations. A random shuffle through the deck: Bootsy Collins, the late Eddie "Maggot Brain" Hazel, various Last Poets (and all the controversies that follow in their wake), James Blood Ulmer singing Schoolly-D's "I Wanna Get Dusted", Jonah Sharp, Jah Wobble, Blind Idiot God's Andy Hawkins, a rendition by painter Julian Schnabel of Tammy Wynette's "Apartment Number Nine" accompanied by Ornette Coleman.

Between now and Christmas: a trip to Kansas to record William Burroughs for a collaboration with Ornette Coleman, a trio improvisation album with Tony Williams and Buckethead, a tour of Japan with the Pankiller trio of Laswell, John Zorn, Mick Harris. "If I ever have to pull

cases there was interesting music and in some cases the government would pick the musicians. So in Uzbekistan you had guys looking like The Village People and they're singing to a backing tape, or a Heavy Metal band that only played ballads. That was pretty great, actually."

Drones "We went to Uzbekistan, to Ulan Bator in Mongolia, to Hohot, which is Inner Mongolia. It's really Chinese but a lot of Mongolians are living there. In Ulan Bator I recorded a lot of singers and instrument players, but actually told them it was for a recording and could they just make drones and play long tones and I would mix them with something else. I made a record with Pete Namlook using that recording. So it's all bass, with bass feedback, loops of bass and no rhythm, except for the repetitive bass sounds with this Mongolian stuff."

Myths and pure fiction (Ryuchi Sakamoto interviewed in *The Wire* 128. "Laswell was from Chicago and he was working as a roadie — he met Miles by chance, and somehow Miles liked this guy, which was Bill, and gave him some cash to help him.") Laswell laughs in disbelief. "God

some kind of a subversive, or a hip guy. That it's very dark and sarcastic. I always thought the opposite and that book was really about freedom. There's a lot of hope in that writing and I thought it was amazing also to connect with the Egyptian *Book Of The Dead* and the *Story Of The Souls*. I thought, this is great information."

Behind the curtain "Real music, sound. The work Burroughs did with Gysin, which wasn't really known at the time they were doing it, was all about deconstructing language and form. The only way to arrive at some new way was by deconstructing or changing — by the cut-up method or by erasing the word, rub out the word — all that is incredibly valuable for the musician."

"I won't even say musician, because normally musicians are no different from sports people. But let's say an artist. That's pretentious too. A person that's trying to be creative. I think all that is vital information and you can



this is incredible. He's just making it up as he goes. It's so much of an act that even he [Sakamoto] doesn't know." Try Detroit, rather than Chicago. Forget the po' boy routine, but inject some key names: MCS, Funkadelic, Tony Williams Lifetime, Vanilla Fudge. Bands from the late 60s/early 70s, breaking the rules of who you are supposed to be, or what should go with what.

Next, maybe a label for sound ("music that doesn't depend on a predictable form or a clichéd style to determine a texture or a feeling or shape") with readings, what they call spoken word. "I hate that term." Readings to be released from Bron Gysin, Paul Bowles, Joseph Beuys, Jean-Luc Godard. Not necessarily literature, but not "decorating the metronome", either.

"Words become especially interesting, things interesting or things even just abstract that give quick images of things. I did this thing where William Burroughs spoke [Material, Seven Souls, 1989] and the only reason I was thinking of Burroughs was because I was looking through this book — *The Western Lands* — and I realised how powerful some of the things were he was saying. People always looked at Burroughs as

cut that up too. That's the stuff that really opens up a lot of doors that people didn't even recognise as doors. It makes you think and then not to think. It's really to bypass the brain and get to the knowing of something by direct contact and not always taking the maze of the learning experience which is, for the most part, systems based on other people's discoveries which might have been random."

"Collaborations — that's the key." An archaeology of figures who have warped consensus reality. Curating, retrieving, connecting fragile links between a graphic here, a text there, a sound, a lost soul, a smothered history, or a recorded moment which disabuses the notion that we are all on the same path. Creating what Burroughs and Gysin called *The Third Mind*.

Listen to spoken word as manifesto. Hakim Bey's *TAZ* (Anarchism 1994). "Chaos comes before all principles of order and entropy, it's neither a god nor a maggot, its adobe desires encompass and define

**“I appropriate music from everywhere.**

**I don't think it's possible to own a piece of music.**

**To me, we're all playing the same stuff.”**

every possible choreography, all meaningless aethers and photoglosses." Then look Front cover image a James Koehnline shrine for late 20th century hoodoo, back cover the rippled reality photograph of Ira Cohen (poet, imagist, traveller, trance archaeologist)

Building a temporary autonomous zone "I liked that text [TAZ] when I read it. It had a humour — the way it was also looking at systems and form and religion and everything. It can also be attacking in an encouraging way as well. In fact, when I saw that book I didn't know anything about Hakim Bey or who he was. I'd seen the name a little bit and I assumed it was probably a Muslim from the Middle East, or maybe it's an African guy living in America. But whoever it is, it's obviously a terrorist or anarchist of some kind. And then you go on to find other things.

"I was attracted by the cover when I first saw it. James Koehnline — who had made that cover — I immediately contacted him before I had any contact with Hakim Bey, and started licensing things and getting him to create images. His way is all very primitive collage. No different than cutting up words or tape and it's all done with paper. I thought it was computer art, 'cause I was obsessed with Tadonori Yokoo, the guy that used to do those Miles [David] covers. He did *Agharta* and *Pangaea* and those weird collages, very colourful! When I saw Koehnline's thing, it related to this Yokoo work. Recently in Japan I started to work with Yokoo finally."

Then make another connection, to Mab Klarwein whose paintings have been used by Jon Hassell for three albums. "I'd been licensing some of his old stuff and he did one for *Last Poets*. I think we've done three. He lives in Majorca. He's lived there since the 70s. He's a strange guy. He was born, I think, in Israel. He was really pro-Arab but his family was Jewish. They were pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian so they had a hard time, in their way in those territories and then they moved to New York when he was young. There's a few books that are impossible to find. Most people don't know his work except for *Bitches Brew* and a few other things.

"I finally got to see some of the older stuff he had done. A lot of things for and about Hendrix. Alan Douglas, who was at the time helping to introduce Hendrix to a lot of things, some good — all kinda things, but he was responsible for turning him on to a lot of music. Especially the connections with Miles, Tony Williams and Larry Young. He introduced Hendrix to Mab Klarwein, I believe. There was a whole scene around Hendrix of women who were connected to Mab. Alan's wife, Stella, was very much part of that scene. They used to have a store, like a boutique. She's Moroccan. They would fly to Marrakesh and buy all these weird coats that Hendrix and Brian Jones used to wear, and they'd bring 'em back and sell them to like Miles and Santana and people buying hippy stuff at the time. So that was all this little clique around Hendrix.

"Ira Cohen was a writer and a really strange photographer, 'cause he did Mylar photography. He did the cover of *Devotion* [John McLaughlin, Buddy Miles, Larry Young, released on Douglas]. He just recently found some stuff of Hendrix that he had done. It's exactly what people are doing now with computers."

Hidden webs "That's the network that will leave a shape, I think. A pattern. The rest of it will come and go. Those points connect. They've always been connected and we're forever just discovering that is connected to that, but they've been there the whole time. Ira had a magazine. He printed it in Marrakesh in the 60s, called *Gnowa*, and that magazine was the first to publish any poetry of Paul Bowles. Gysin as well, they had a big connection."

He starts to talk with enthusiasm about Peter Lamborne Wilson's history of Islam in America, and the anthology edited by James Koehnline and Ron Sakolsky — *Gone To Croatan: Origins Of North American Dropout Culture* (Autonomedia) — about the multi-racial, nomadic, isolated tribes which formed during the early settlement of America. "This goes back as far as Sir Walter Raleigh, when they established a village or a city in Virginia. They went back to England to bring more people and when they came back, the people they had left had gone and joined the Indians and they had left this message: 'Gone to Croatan', which was a tribe.

"I see a connection even today with that. Like I have a studio where I'm seeing everyone's trying to get away from a certain way of thinking into a more autonomous space. Into an independence and into a way out of racism and judging people. Everyone's working together and it gets beyond the structure of what you're supposed to be, racially. Where your place is because of colour or how you've been educated."

"Plagiarism as a cultural tactic should be directed at putrid capitalists," writes Hakim Bey, "not potential comrades. There is no exotic other." Laswell concurs, but offers another angle. "I appropriate music from everywhere. I don't think it's possible to own a piece of music. To me, we're all playing the same stuff. It's just combinations that make it new. And there is such a thing as someone who has a voice, that plays a certain way and has a style. I think everyone does that to a certain degree and to me, it's all available. If I did something and it was a piece of music and it had a beat and a theme and even a word or something and if somebody took the exact same thing and put it out and made a million dollars I know that I wouldn't contact them. I know that I wouldn't try to sue them because I don't believe you can own a sequence. I think we're all trapped into playing sequences unless it's totally experimental and then you're doing something else. And that's where it gets interesting. Only then. The rest of it is we're all playing somebody else's stuff. To me, it's chord-changes music."

Not chord-changes music. Cymatic Scan (Fax). "That was done really quickly. I don't think he [Tetsu Inoue] realised we were doing it. I set up a bunch of guitars and stuff, like with E-Bows. He works all analogue, so it's like Electro Harmonix pedals and a bunch of keyboards. You just set it all up and because of the effect of the pedals, they all start talking to each other. And that's incredible. It's always different. I'd set up the same with string instruments, which I never touched this way [Imitates normal playing position] but I'd just do stuff with them when they were down flat. Because I had a volume pedal and primitive pedals, the pedals were doing all the talking.

(Continued on page 80)

# fire walker

**Baaba Maal's brilliant new *Firin'***

***In Fouta* album is the latest record**

**to raise questions about the**

**relationship between African and Western musics.**

**Mark Hudson talks to Maal and his producer Simon Emmerson**

**about the processes that go into the**

**making of a modern world classic.**

It's a long time since lunch, and in the boardroom at Island Records' London offices, Baaba Maal, a slender, luminous figure in a white tracksuit, is munching thoughtfully on a dried apricot.

"I wanted to take the music of the people I grew up with, people who are not professional musicians, but who make music in every aspect of their lives — at parties and ceremonies, when they are working at home or in the fields — and put that together with the most modern Western technology."

Maal is talking about his new album, *Firin' In Fouta* (Island/Mango). It's a riveting work, Maal and British producer Simon Emmerson having incorporated field recordings made in Maal's home territory in northern Senegal into songs and settings of dazzling modernity and immediacy. From the driving New Age drones of "Sama Duniya" to the Afro-cumbia of "African Women" and the overwhelming mbalax of "Mbaye", each track has a clear and memorable identity. And it's not mere gratuitous eclecticism, either. Along with Youssou N'Dour's recent chart success, it's all part of Africa's new pop impact that is leaving the old World Music concept far behind.

"Swing Yela", for instance, is a yela — a song traditionally sung while pounding grain — given a big Swingbeat backing track, a Rare Groove horn refrain and entrant interlusions from the Dakar rappers Positive Black Soul. It's a compelling track, but the reaction to the album among the UK's African music cognoscenti has not been unanimously favourable. There's been talk of the producers grafting extraneous elements onto Maal's music, and of the music representing an aberration from his 'real path'.

Such criticisms have no currency in the day-to-day working realities or ambitions of musicians such as Maal and Emmerson. While the album is far more of a collaboration between artist and producers than is normally admitted with African records — Emmerson and his partners, engineer Ron Asian and programmer Jules Brookes, take co-writing credits on nearly half the tracks — the music has its origins early in Maal's career, when he was both studying

Western classical music at Dakar's Institute des Beau Arts and performing with a traditional music group called Lasly Fouta.

"It seemed to me that our traditional music was not established as professional music in the way that jazz and classical music are. It was just something that we heard at our private traditional ceremonies," says Maal. "So when I went to the institute, I tried to see what Western music had that African music did not, that made it easy for it to be recorded, promoted and sold. I saw that all the things that people use in Western music we also have in African music, but under different names. We do them perhaps in a more natural spontaneous way. We make our music at the moment that we feel it. We don't plan it. So I saw that for African music to be promoted to the rest of the world it needs to have more structure in it. One has to see what is most important in a song and a melody and strengthen those things."

For *Firin' In Fouta*, Emmerson, founder of Working Week and a soul jazz veteran, steeped himself in tapes of Maal and other Senegalese musicians playing beautiful, meandering 20 minute acoustic songs. He, Asian and Brookes then spent a fortnight with Maal in London, creating four or five minute songs that worked in a conventional way, with hooks and choruses. While Maal returned to Senegal, the Britons worked on the songs, "programming them up", as Emmerson puts it, "getting some nice grooves." When Maal returned to London, he told them what worked and what didn't. Then the whole team went to Senegal, carrying virtually a whole digital recording studio in their hand luggage.

Maal took them first to his home territory of Fouta Toro in the country's north, where they recorded traditional Tukolor musicians professional gnosis and ordinary people who, as Maal says, "use music in every aspect of their lives."

"After a while it all became very dreamlike," says Emmerson, who had been profoundly affected by the experience of working in Senegal on Maal's previous album *Lam Toro*, working with musicians who were "unembarrassed by their own spirituality." "We were working right out in the fields, in the middle of nowhere, and people just kept coming to be recorded. There were guys who'd walked all night across the desert, and they arrived singing, carrying red umbrellas."

The team then returned to Dakar's Studio 2000, where they



“You can go to a baptism in  
Dakar today,  
and hear nothing  
but ragga.”

recorded for a fortnight with Maali's band Daande Lenol. "We did tracks like 'Mbaye', which are pure Daande Lenol," says Emmerson. "Then we had them playing over our own drum loops and grooves. And we had sessions that were just pure sabre drumming."

Back in London, the three Britons spent a month listening to the material and working out an "architecture" for the album. They then convened with Maali at Peter Gabriel's Real World studios, where strings, horns and vocals were recorded, and the whole lot put together.

This complex and fascinating process, which took eight months, reveals that while much of the recording was done in Africa, *Finn' In Fouta* was very much Made In Britain. Emmerson sees no reason to apologise for this, and is pugnaciously defensive against accusations of musical adulteration.

"If the album is good, it's because we got to the point where we didn't just have to be nice to each other. A lot of very heavy and intense discussion went into the making of this album. If we put a wrong chord into a song it was, 'No, sorry, we don't do it like that.' If we moved a drumbeat slightly and put it in the wrong place in the bar, Baaba'd say, 'This is wrong!' Often he'd put it somewhere that was quite unfamiliar to me."

"When I first went to Senegal, I felt very suspicious of my own position as an outsider coming into their culture. But gradually I realised that I also have something to contribute, something that they respect and that they want. Baaba wanted to use machines, but he doesn't program. So I think we were able to help him articulate things he was hearing but didn't know how to create himself."

"In Dakar, we were running loops and grooves that we'd created in London, and the musicians were saying, 'Yeah, fantastic!' Like 'Swing Yela' — that's such a great groove. They were immediately in there, vibing on it, playing all over it. There was no sense of, 'Oh, dear, the machines are on.'"

"African musicians are a lot more musically cosmopolitan than we in the West give them credit for, they're into all kinds of things. They're sitting around in these little cafes over there, listening to James Brown and Public Enemy. They love 70s funk. If bands over there are saying, 'Excite us, bring over grooves,' then why not? I don't mind anyone listening to pure African roots music. I love all that. What no one can do is to deny African musicians the right to take their music forward."

There is another argument — that has absolutely nothing to do with purism — that we've got a lot more to learn from Africa, as far as rhythm is concerned, than it has from us, and that Senegal, specifically, has its own musical and rhythmic sensibilities (in fact it contains several diverse musical cultures) and it would be disastrous if these were jettisoned in the pursuit of 'progress' or 'the way forward' as defined by London groove merchants, however well meaning. *Finn' In Fouta* is a fascinating collaboration between African and British



musicians, but since its presiding aesthetic is, broadly, that of Western dance music, it cannot (in fact, it doesn't try to) take on many of the more demanding challenges of Senegalese rhythmic traditions (which have a complexity that most Western musicians couldn't begin to contend with). In a nutshell, Senegal has its thing, London has its thing, and hopefully they're not about to become the same.

Emmerson "Obviously there are many ways forward, but African musicians are going to continue using technology whether we like it or not. Even in fairly remote parts of Africa they're using MIDI gear. They'll be using it a lot more, and they'll create their own type of music out of it. Music evolves. You ask Baaba. When the kora arrived on the scene, 200 years ago, there were a lot of people who didn't want to know."

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Maali's opinion on such complex issues is somewhat ambivalent, his attempts to expand his music's global perspective and profile is tempered by a desire to see the traditions of Senegalese music preserved as living entities. "A lot of things that make up the past of African music, that bring the colour of African music are disappearing one by one. Musicians like Salif Keita and myself grew up in villages under the influence of our grandparents. We went on journeys, like the ancient musicians did, to find out about our culture. But the younger generation of musicians don't have time for that. Now it's all clubs and sound systems rather than traditional ceremonies. You can go to a baptism in Dakar today, and hear nothing but ragga. We need to create a library of information in Africa using computers and new technology to preserve the tradition of the gnats for the coming generations. If we don't do that, in ten years time we will have music in Africa, but we will not really be able to say that it is 'African music'."

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HAPPY TO BE PART OF THE INDUSTRY OF HUMAN HAPPINESS

# kosmische echoes

In the late 60s, a musical  
revolution exploded

across West Germany, and they called it **Krautrock**. In this  
exclusive report, **Julian Cope** provides a guide to the first  
stirrings of a Great Kosmische Musik.

Photos by Johnny Greig.

When *The Wire* originally commissioned Julian Cope to write about 'Krautrock' (ie the music that emerged from the German rock underground during the late 60s and early 70s made by groups such as Can, Neu!, Faust, Amon Düül, etc), the idea was for him to deliver a 4000 word 'brief history' of the subject. *The Wire* has been planning to run a primer on Krautrock for some time. This year especially, a wide variety of groups have emerged citing Krautrock as a prime influence, and many of these groups have found their way into the pages of this magazine. In addition, many of the more influential Krautrock groups — Can, Faust, Tangerine Dream — are now working again and releasing new material. It felt like the time was right for us to provide some context for these developments.

Julian Cope will be familiar to most people as one of the more eccentric figures of UK pop, but he is also a keen observer of the more extreme moments from the last 30 years of rock and pop culture. For instance, he says he has been 'obsessed' with Krautrock since his early teens, and has built up a formidable knowledge of the subject as well as a vast collection of Krautrock ephemera. What's more, he was keen to write about it: the opportunity seemed too good to miss.

While writing the article, Julian started burrowing deeper and deeper into the detail and minutiae of the subject. As a result, when he finally finished writing, what he (and we) had wasn't so much a 4000 word brief

history as something of the order of a 40,000 word *not so brief* history, in fact a full-blown book, complete with individual chapters examining some of the more 'important' Krautrock groups of the period, including Can, Neu! and Faust.

In the end we asked Julian to deliver the chapters of his book which detailed those aspects of the Krautrock story which are the most shrouded in mist and myth, which haven't already been rehearsed *ad infinitum* over the past two decades. Even then, we were talking about a formidable amount of material for a single article. So we decided to run the piece in two parts, over two months. Part two will follow in the January issue of *The Wire*. Meanwhile, the following article examines the atmosphere in Germany during the mid-60s, the cultural ferment which opened the door for the Krautrock groups to emerge, and the early days of the *Kosmische Musik* scene itself, its key players, epochal meetings and epiphanal moments. Most people know something about the subsequent development of Krautrock, few seem to understand *how* and *why* these groups emerged and what caused them to make such remarkable and unique music in the first place. **TONY HERRINGTON, EDITOR**





In the early 1960s, while fashion and pop music danced together across the skies of Britain and the USA, the rest of Europe merely watched. The French affected not to give a damn. They had already adopted Le 50s rock 'n' roll style which would sustain them along their chic way, while the Scandinavians went mad in their own quiet but psychotic manner, and adopted a love for American cars, streetgangs and the most primitive music available. But in West Germany, there were British and American airforce bases. As the scene of the Allies' victory, West Germany was home to thousands of US and British troops so German radio was very quick to pick up on rock 'n' roll from the start. The post-war West German kids learned their English from the radio and the TV, they all had American accents. But they also saw the huge American cars driven by the troops on leave, and they learned to love the whole style: chewing gum, Coca-Cola, jeans and

everything else they saw as good from the USA. Like Japan, West Germany after the war was showered with so much aid that the culture of the aid-bringers inevitably left some pretty hefty thumb-prints on the people. If West Germany was to not sink under the weight of imported foreign culture then the people had to act quickly.

**But there were still heroes to inspire** West German youth. Germany was the centre of all the most important modern experimental music — and in Karlheinz Stockhausen, they already had the greatest modern composer living right there among them. But though Stockhausen was a huge influence to young artists, they still had the problem of *Right Now!* Experimental music was fine, but everyone continued to return to rock 'n' roll for its instant gratification, its instant achievement, and its instant entertainment at dances every Saturday



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night. And once the West Germans had learned how to play pop music, they would next have to learn how to truly assimilate it into their culture, rather than merely aping the British and American groups

John And Yoko And The Paris Riots By 1967, the Federal Republic of Germany was rocking. The Rattles had even produced West Germany's first international hit, "The Witch", but the groups still sounded like everyone else. They had taken a while to embrace the whole trip, but that had always been the German way. Even the Roman historians had been prompted to comment that, while the German tribes were the hardest to Christianise, God help the tribes north of the Rhine when the newly-Christianised Germans went on their born-again kick. And the newly-rocking West Germans were born-again for *shitdamn* sure. Briefly, during 1967, West Germany seemed to become a province of British and American culture. Psychedelia came six months late but stayed forever. Like Detroit's Stooges, who were so provincial that they were still wearing grown-out Troggs haircuts in 1969, West German groups were slow to pick up on a trend but even slower to put it down. The phasing which could be heard as a fashionable extra on early 1967 British pop hits would still be heard on 1974 West German Krautrock epics, fully assimilated into the style of the band. The op-art, pop-art and psychedelic light show images which had defined British and American record covers in the 1967/8 period would come to dominate the whole of the 1970s West German underground.

Certain events all over the world had caused this musical gearchange into overdrive. When Yoko Ono got together with John Lennon, the combined populations of Britain and America frowned in disapproval. In West Germany, this was not the case at all. The hip artistic community knew all about Yoko Ono. She was visible and she was a fine and inspiring artist. And, most of all, by picking John Lennon, she gave her high artistic approval to The Beatles' kid's music right then and there. For many artists in West Germany, that was reason enough to form a rock 'n' roll group.

Also in 1968, the riots in Paris saw students hurling Molotov cocktails at the police and Situationists spraying "Save petrol, Burn Cars", while the Russians sent tanks into Alexander Dubcek's Czechoslovakia, re-enforcing the ideal of freedom in any wavering young West German hippies. Copycat riots in Berlin took place over a musical backdrop of the new freekick music by road veteran Edgar Froese's new acid freeform group, Tangerine Dream, and Psy Free, a very young bass-less trio led by the drummer, Klaus Schulze.



**In 1969, German musicians talked**

**about cosmic music**

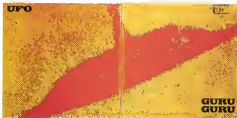
**as if it was their way to the stars.**

The music was somersaulting, trippy and deeply out there. Schulze and Psy Free guitarist, Alex Conti, were vehemently opposed to all capitalism — playing for hours for free, night after night. Pop festivals followed in the wake of Monterey, and one of the groups at the 1968 Essener Sontag Festival was a politico/musical commune called Amon Duul. Hours before the show, it was announced that the commune's short lived peace was at an end, and two different groups actually played that night, known forever as Amon Duul I and Amon Duul II.

Groups were all co-operatives now, and non-playing managers were illegal. The new scene continued to develop across wide age ranges. One day, Holger Czukay was talking to one of his students about his own former teacher, Karlheinz Stockhausen. The young student, a violinist/guitarist called Michael Karoli, was not impressed. He played his teacher The Beatles' "I Am The Walrus", and Czukay was astounded that rock 'n' roll had come so far. He phoned his friend, Immi Schmidt, another student of Stockhausen, and suggested they form a group with Michael Karoli, ten years their junior. This weird combination of Stockhausen and psychedelia would soon be called The Can. And it was a show that would run and run.

#### Stockhausen Sees The Jefferson Airplane

Karlheinz Stockhausen is central to the entire history of Krautrock. And one massive piece of work, 1966's *Hymnen*, is pivotal to that whole unconscious movement. *Hymnen* had repercussions throughout all of West Germany, and not least in the heads of the young artists. It was a huge 113 minute piece, subtitled "Anthems For Electronic And Concrete Sounds", divided up into four long LP sides, entitled "Region I", "Region II", "Region III" and "Region IV". Why was *Hymnen* so important to the Germans? In short, because it took "Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles" and screwed it up, screwed it down, played it through weird electronic gizmos, distorted it horribly and basically treated it pretty badly. The German public all furry-freaked. The left wing didn't see the funny side at all and accused Stockhausen of appealing to the basest German feelings, while the right wing hated him for vilifying their pride and joy, and letting the Europeans laugh at them.



Stockhausen had just returned from six months at the University of California, where he had lectured on experimental music. Among those at his seminars were The Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh, Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane, and many other psychedelic musicians. Far from snubbing the new music, Stockhausen was seen at a Jefferson Airplane show at the Fillmore West, and was quoted as saying that the music "... really blows my mind." So while the young German artists loved Stockhausen for embracing their own rock 'n' roll culture, they doubly loved him for what they recognised as the beginning of a freeing of all German symbols. By reducing "Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles" to its minimum possible length, Stockhausen had codified it. It had much the same effect as a British man or woman hearing an ice-cream van outside — some kind of response is triggered whether they want ice-cream or not. Stockhausen had unconsciously diffused a symbol of oppression, and so enabled the people to have it back. During all this fighting, it was casually overlooked that the German national anthem was only one of over ten national anthems on *Hymnen*, and the mistreatment only appears on side two, along with the Russian anthem and a whole group of African anthems. But the effect was still the same. Stockhausen had explained his use of national anthems as symbolic — "identification signs for the nation" — a pop-art gesture — comparable to the banal, everyday pictorial motifs of the American pop-artists, whose work Stockhausen knew so well," wrote his biographer, Michael Kurtz.

#### Mama Duul And Her Sauerkrautband

But the new rock 'n' roll in West Germany was not rock 'n' roll at all. It was a meltdown music form which defied all categories but that which the West German musicians called it — *Kosmische Musik*. It may have been Edgar Froese's term, but in 1969 all the West German musicians talked about cosmic music with a great reverence, a great idealism, as though they knew that it was their way to the stars. Beethoven, their tragic hero, had said that music was far greater than philosophy, and the communes and collectives came alive all over West Germany to rid themselves of all pent up feelings in the Great Rush To The New *Kosmische Musik*.

All the 'real' musicians had left Amon Duul to join Amon Duul II, a process that would continue over the years. But the drain on Amon Duul I was so great that they were reduced to one strumming, drumming, chanting male/female mass, like the greatest Plastic Ono Band session ever. One extremely psychedelic weekend, Amon Duul recorded (or over-recorded, to be more precise) one enormous session, which lasted so long that their first three LPs, *Psychedelic Underground*, *Collopping and Disorder*, all came from it. Some claim that soon after they split from music altogether to continue in a purely political way, but kept up the illusion for years with seemingly new LPs.

The first Amon Duul records are extraordinary classics and extremely raw, like stoned Orcs playing never-ending versions of The Mothers' "Return Of The Son Of Monster Magnet" and The Stooges' "LA Blues". They are dosed with a higher level of vibe than any other free-rock records — relentless, uplifting and full of the crudest gimmicks that all work perfectly. Amon Duul did not stay long, but they laid the beginnings of Krautrock with their music, and with one particular song on *Psychedelic Underground*. The name of the song translated as "Mama Duul And Her Sauerkraut Band Start Up". With that title, the lazy British rock press at last had something to latch on to. Aha, we'll call it Krautrock.



Can, Kraftwerk, Kosmische Musik And The Rise Of Ohr Records. West Germany was full of supposed 'head' groups by now. But many of them still did not sound remotely German, slavishly trying to be Hard Rock. Others, like Embryo and Birth Control, mixed obvious Teutonic into unsuccessful fusions with British/American rock. But in the meantime, Amon Duul II, the musical half of the commune, had recorded an amazing free-flowing LP called *Phoebus Dei* for the British Liberty label. Its overtly mysterious sleeve first confronted me when I was 13 and standing in Tamworth Woolworths. I was with my Welsh grandfather, and I asked about the meaning of *Phoebus Dei*. "Bloody hell, don't tell your mother," he snorted. "That means God's cock!" And with the release of that 20 minute title track, both branches of Amon Duul had proved their commitment to the new cosmic political commune scene. This record was very extreme, both the chiming sound and dizzy two-colour sleeve like something from The 13th Floor Elevators' International Artists label in Texas.

And something else again was stirring in Cologne. The Stockhausen/Psychedelia-inspired Can were now a five piece recording at Schloss Norvenich, the castle home of their patron, Mami Lohse. All except one was in his thirties and they were a frightening combination of exuberance and great experience. These were exceptional people with an exceptional musical vision, "an anarchist community," said their organist, Irmin Schmidt.

Though Can's first pieces were situations more like performance art, their new singer, a black ex-teacher called Malcolm Mooney, continually pushed them further into the severest most restrictive rock 'n' roll, "towards The Velvet Underground," as Holger Czuykay later said. The shows were fantastic, though Malcolm Mooney had a tendency to freak out, collapse or attack the audience. But it was the release of their first album that opened up the whole scene. *Monster Movie* is a stone classic. There was still no visionary in any big record company willing to put money into the new West German sound, but when *Monster Movie* was released on Music Factory Records, in August 1969, the tiny 500 pressing sold out immediately and changed the whole West German rock scene. It was the first album of the scene that sounded as powerful and as well-recorded as standard American and British records, yet it retained the brooding German Velvet-inspired sound. Some idea of the attitude of the *Kosmische Musik* brigade at this time can be gained by merely reading the credits on the first Can album.

Irmin Schmidt — Admnaspace co-ordinator & organ laser, Jaki Leibezeit — propulsion engineer & mystic space chart reader, Holger Czuykay — hot from Vietnam technical laboratory chief & red-armed bass, Michael Karoli — sonar & radarated guitar pilot, Malcolm Mooney — linguistic space communicator.

In Berlin, Psy Free split. Klaus Schulze and Edgar Froese briefly collaborated in a new Tangerine Dream, to create the awesome and freeform acid-blt LP *Electronic Meditation*. This was truly the *Kosmische Musik* they had dreamed of. If Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful Of Secrets* had been played by trippy

multi-dimensional space beings, instead of the appallingly insipid Waters, Wright, Gilmour and Mason, then it would surely have sounded as real as this. *And Electronic Meditation* was given special treatment, too. Some genius at the huge West German record company Metronome had finally caught on to the new sound. They asked the record producer, Peter Meisel, to put together an especially different 'heavy' label, with the accent on Germanic-sounding groups and special packaging. Meisel called the label *Ohr* (German for 'ear'), and asked Reinhard Hippen, the acclaimed young industrial artist, to design the first five LP sleeves with a uniformity that would make the label instantly aligned with Right Now. The results were brutal and crudely finished, but delightfully so. Hippen's recurring theme used the broken bodies of dolls, and on the cover of *Electronic Meditation*, a headless doll is trapped by the wires of an early synthesizer patch-bay.

All the early *Ohr* records were interesting and all of them weird. On the LP *Firesandbabys Beatshow*, Floh De Cologne played an impenetrable, wordy, structured garage music, like an incapable Mothers Of Invention, a berkeller Fugs — lots of shouting and urgent socialist messages breaking up the already ramshackle sound. Much better, and occasionally incredible, were Guru Guru, a heavy rock trio

with its heart in the free rock that The MC5 were never allowed to record. No vocals except affected 'thing' voices, scarily repeated and not very often at all. Mainly just huge epic instrumentals, LPs of two or three tracks per side. Their debut album *UFO* now sounds like a spaced *menopée à trois* of Joy Division, Deep Purple and a more *Kosmische* version of Neil Young's experimental feedback frenzies on *Arc*. They could be faster than anyone, but their greatest songs

were Glenn Branca symphonies eight years ahead of time. And their titles alone, man. *Shit!* *'Stone In'*, *'Der LSD-Marsch'*, *'Spaceship'*, *'Oxymeron'*, *'Der Electrolurch'*.

The *Ohr* experiment was a tremendous success, and opened up the way for more conservative companies to take risks. In a country as big as West Germany, there was a place for many many groups. In 1971, after the release of one album, Organisation changed their name to Kraftwerk and released their self-titled first LP. While including wah-guitar and a drummer, Kraftwerk was a bizarre, and mainly successful, attempt to make an entirely German record. On the album opener, 'Ruckzuck', their music pre-empted the toppy motorik bass-less sound that Neu! would later become famous for, but Kraftwerk sped-up at will, slowed down at will, and had no groove at all. On the last track of the album, a ten minute freak-out called 'Vom Himmel Hoch', synthesizers emulated dive-bombing raids and actual recordings of explosions punctuated the music in a shattering way. 'Kraftwerk' is a strictly German word which translates as both 'Men At Work' and 'Powerplant', and the leaders of the group, Ralf Hutter and Florian Schneider, were both true experimentalists. Unreleased recordings from that time reveal there to have been in a constant state of flux. Kraftwerk 2 opened with 'Klingklang', an ever changing 17 minute experimental mantra with a Stockhausen-inspired beginning. And they were to change beyond all recognition after their huge 1974 hit album *Autobahn*. But always Kraftwerk returned to their driving fixations, gearchanges included. Perhaps it is the autobahn psyche of the post-war West Germans — unconsciously linked to the USA through its thousands of miles of easily driven, straight roads. Certainly, the grey metronomic driving

unchangingness of The Velvet Underground manifested in most West German bands, though of all the British bands of that time there's maybe only Roxy Music who could ever claim a true Velvet influence.

The driving mentality in West German music was forged on the autobahn that travels south in a great arc from the far-westerly city of Cologne to Munich in the south, taking in the cities of Bonn, Coblenz, Frankfurt, Mainz, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Ulm and Augsburg. The thirst for music on this circuit alone was equal in size to the entire British scene. West Germany was by far the biggest market in Europe. But the autobahn was only one of three major contributions that the rock 'n' roll live circuit began to supply, and it soon became clear that West German music could sustain itself without ever looking out to the international scene again. But it was just then that one of the most spectacular contributors of all appeared on the Krautrock scene.

möbius & plank



**The Kaiser On The Warpath: Rolf-Ulrich's Grand Design**

A Dutch folk journalist is the last thing the scene expected. But Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser was a progressive in everything, and notorious for being a man with a mission. He blew into *Ohr* Records and tied everyone up immediately. He argued with Edgar Froese over the definition of *Kosmische Musik*, and said that it could be applied to all forms of music. And even more outrageously, he proved it. On being asked to take over *Ohr*, R-U Kaiser immediately signed Amion Duul I and gave them a 'head' producer, the wondrously named Julius Schittenhelm. Their *Paradieswärts Duul* LP was an amazingly beautiful freefolk epic, somewhere between an acoustic *White Light/White Heat* and a Teutonic 1968 Red Clayola playing The 13th Floor Elevators. Its three long fuzz-acoustic songs, 'Love Is Peace', 'Snow Your Thirst, Sun Your Open Mouth' and 'Paramechanische Welt' were Amion Duul I's glorious swansongs before they rode off heroically into the sunset. And the artistic success of *Paradieswärts Duul* confirmed Kaiser's suspicion that many forms of the *Kosmische Musik* were out there waiting to be found. He took the far-out buskers Withnash & Westrupp and turned them into an absolutely inspiring Gothic chamber space-folk thing like mixing Neil Young's *On The Beach* with Frank Zappa's Straight Records releases. Tim Buckley's freeform album *Storrsolvar*, and also his earlier *Happy Sad and Goodbye* and *Hello* LPs. In America, they would certainly have recorded for ESP-Disk.

Impressed by Kaiser's success at *Ohr*, the industry giant BASF asked him to take over the Pilz label, their hip subsidiary. In true Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser style, he kept control of *Ohr* and annexed Pilz as a cosmic folk label. 'Pilz' is German for mushroom, and that record company's logo was a fabulous pop art fly agaric just about as *Kosmische* as they came. Rolf-Ulrich transferred Withnash & Westrupp to Pilz as a symbolic gesture, then proceeded to sign and influence his next big thing. Of course, he dropped the entire roster overnight in the great road to the ultimate *Kosmische Folk* label.

Popol Vuh were Rolf-Ulrich's next obsession, a group as big as their name. The Popol Vuh is the Mayan Book Of The Dead, a terrifying mythological anthology of a 9th Century Meso-American people. But while R-U Kaiser could influence this group, the real vision was in the head and hands of its leader, the wonderful Florian Fricke. Fricke had not chosen the name Popol Vuh lightly. The first album was already released by the time Kaiser got involved. And that first album, *Affenstunde*, sent shockwaves throughout music with its use of Moog synthesizer in a (gasp!) non-classical setting. This was huge news in



1971, and the German *Sounds* magazine Readers' Poll nominated them "Best Newcomer Of The Year". Popol Vuh were on Beat Club, and Fricke played his Moog synthesizer as a guest on Tangerine Dream's *Kosmische* classic double album *Zeit*. But for all this, the meeting of Florian Fricke with Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser in late summer of 1971 reverberated all across the *Kosmische Musik* scene. For *Affenstunde's* follow-up kicked its predecessor's dick into the dirt.

Everything about *In Den Garten Pharoas* feels right. It's trance music, and Florian Fricke was a master composer and quite capable of taking the listener into dimensions unheard of by the other *Kosmische Musik*. The whole of side two of *In Den Garten Pharoas* was taken up by the high magic of "Vuh". And I do not say high magic lightly, for "Vuh" tunes the listener into the heavens like no other piece I have ever heard. It maintains an incredible hold on the listener and, such is the intensity of the piece, "Vuh" actually can be too much to listen to in the wrong frame of mind, and dizzying is the freedom of feeling the music engages. Florian Fricke, R-U Kaiser's new wonder boy, was on the way to a long and inspiring career.

#### Birth Of The Brain Label

But by the middle of 1971, Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser was driving his employees mad. He stood over them while they worked. He stormed into their offices and bawled them out while they were talking to their bands, freaking out everyone concerned. His trip was powerful, but you needed him on your side. Two A&R men called Bruno Wendel and Gunter Korber decided they couldn't take any more and started a record company of their own. It was to be known as Brain, and was to become synonymous with some of the greatest Krautrock of all.

Wendel and Korber brought Guru Guru with them from Ohr, and immediately signed the extremely John Cale/Velvets influenced Cluster. This duo was a schizophrenic mix. They had previously been called Kluster, and their third member was Conrad Schnitzler, hero-in-exile of Tangerine Dream's *Electronic Meditations*. Now Cluster was just the poetically named Moebius and Roedelius. Cluster were (and still are) a rare collaboration. Like some bizarre husband and wife team, they let their drum-machine generated muse fire up, and they would sit there in front of it, like a hot stove, and play until it didn't feel good anymore. Early Cluster music has a raging peace in it, a huge beating heart, planet-sized and awesome. But clothed in a skinny body which continues to keep you from hearing all of the unearthly power.

For their first Brain album, *Cluster 2*, Moebius and Roedelius were joined by the producer/engineer Conrad Plank. He co-wrote the music and produced the whole thing, creating an incessant nightscape, a helicopter ride over miles of countryside, but the lights of the city ever present, and even occasionally flying right into the city itself and almost burning up in the glare. Along with Dieter Dierks, Plank was the mainstay of all the greatest Krautrock on record. Those two engineers alone were responsible for the combined sound of Tangerine Dream, Neu!, Guru Guru, and Ash Ra Tempel, a formidable weight to carry around.

Like all other 'heavy' labels of the early 70s, Brain had a fair share of dreadful and contrived American/English copycat rubbish, like Jane And The Scorpions. They also saw the demise of Guru Guru. From free rock to free gift that you can't give away. One of Brain's greatest releases was undoubtedly number 1004, the soon-to-be-legendary *Neu!*. But that's a whole other can of worms, in fact a whole other story. □

Taken from Julian Cope's forthcoming book, *Krautrock Sampler One Head's Guide To The Great Kosmische Musik, 1968 Onwards*. Part two of this article will appear in the January issue of *The Wire*.

#### Five Classic Images Of Krautrock

Krautrock was the German pre-punk self-awareness trip of all time. The groups had suddenly plugged into the niche where the post-war British psyche still had the Germans pegged — as the Bogyman Rotter of all Europe — and they exploited the situation in the most genius of ways. From Amon Düül I to Amon Düül II, via Faust, Cluster, Can and Guru Guru, early 70s German groups played this role. Here are my five favourite Krautrock images.

- Faust IV opened with their 12 minute epic called "Krautrock" (a huge double-album sampler on the Brain label was also called *Krautrock*).
- Amon Düül's "Mr Kraut's Jinx" and "La Krautoma" both appeared on the sprawling 1975 double album, *Made In Germany*.
- The first 'Kraut' reference was on Amon Düül II's 1969 "Mama Düül And Her Sauerkrautband Start Up!".
- Cluster's Dieter Moebius and his producer, Conny Plank, released an album of Bavarian reggae-meets-New York-fuzz and called it *Rastokraut*.
- The greatest Krautrock image of all is surely the sleeve of Amon Düül II's *Live In London* (below). A gigantic German-helmeted stormtrooper insect claws the London Post Office Tower from its foundations as flying saucers lay the city to waste overhead.

In hindsight, Krautrock was not remotely 'hippy' in its modern post-punk definition. It was soaringly idealistic and hard as nails. This *Kosmische Musik* was played by painted freaks and longhairs whose attitude had never left the idealism or the communes/collectives of the mid 1960s. Krautrock's heart was still in The MC5's guitars and The White Panthers' civil insurrection of 1969 Detroit, and the sheer moment of Andy Warhol's 1966 Exploding Plastic Inevitable. Guru Guru even tried to redeem the swastika on the eponymous *Guru Guru* LP, placing it in the centre of the record-sleeve, and reversing it on an ancient woven design, therefore restoring the swastika to its original peaceful direction. (It was a brave idealism but, like The Swastika Redeemer, a contemporary New York artist who is tattooed with hundreds of different and ancient swastikas all over his body, it was hardly enough to obliterate recent memories.)

But Krautrock can only truly be defined in hindsight, as many of the groups were only intent on capturing the Moment. There are more classic extended 20 minute freeouts within the sleeves of Krautrock LPs than in the British and American music of all time. And all in space-punk gatefold sleeves, too. Albums were impossible to judge as they came out because they defied analysis

alongside anything else but other Krautrock. And for all its 60s idealism, the West German scene was never in a stasis — it did not yearn for some lost undefined Golden Age, but constantly dipped into the new music forms that arrived and adapted them as its own. □



# naked eye

The drive to fuse sounds from different cultures and traditions

is one of the defining aspects of 90s music. It is also one of the most bogus and dangerous, argues Richard Cook.



If you read enough interviews with musicians, it doesn't take long before the reflexes respond to certain, um, key phrases coming up time and again. It's not that musicians are constitutionally lacking in eloquence, or can't think of anything fresh to say, as often as not, useless interviewers settle for mundane questions that can't help but lead up to a blind alley of clichés. The usual giveaway is the one about musical preferences, classifications and the like. What comes out is a protestation against the pigeonhole. I don't like my music to be considered as any one category. I listen to everything. I like all kinds of music.

It's easy to sympathise. Everyone is so damn reasonable these days about mixing and matching musics, hardly anyone dares to step outside the circle. All around us there are players from one culture making connections with their compatriots in another. World Music, if there is such a thing, exists on the precept of a global jam session that never ends. Labels such as Real World or projects like WOMAD pin together the vibrations of the Caring 90s into simple mosaics, a UNICEF idea of cultural co-op. Standing up for a single line of thought can appear to be tantamount to promoting global disorder. Ecologists want to preserve indigenous cultures, but I bet most of them have Ry Cooder and Ali Farka Touré's *Talking Timbuktu* in their lead free cars.

If the 80s was the great decade of rhythm, what's followed it is a mishmash that can seem like the most redundant kind of progress. It's miraculous how so many have suddenly discovered their affinity for music that 20 years ago was the preserve of marginal scholars. Today's record collections burst with exotica, like the baggage of Victorian travellers. Marketing has made us all partake of the intercontinental caravanserai. In an age when the peerless solemnity of plainsong has become an adman's wet dream, and the distance between grand opera and HiPop might only be the eyeblink space between commercials, we are all helpless eclectics. Only a worldwide media shutdown could save Western eyes and ears. The non-Western world will follow just as soon as we can get the moderns to them.

Perhaps it's time we took a long hard look at eclecticism and asked how much virtue still remains in the ceaseless cross-pollination. New things are always emerging, whether they be Grunge or Jungle, and such forced blooms will always muster attention in the hothouse. Genres have started to spindly and fold as the century winds down. Commentators suggest a finite lifespan for some of the key organisms of the music of our age: jazz, rock, anything you like, it's all doomed. In their place, a multicultural bazaar where the various stallholders gain eminence only by whoever shouts the loudest.

The most offensive thing about eclecticism is its unconscious tyranny

You aren't allowed to question it because to do so would be to prejudice the right to go fusion. Who would dare cancel such a freedom? It's hard to voice a dissent over the legitimacy of some fabulous collaboration because that betrays the most dangerous streak of all: elitism. Whether it's Red Hot And Cool or the latest meeting of folk roots with cybernetics, the experiment, the process, is the ennobling factor. Never mind that some of us would rather listen to music than the idea of it.

Nevertheless, the rush towards a blissful state where all musics are somehow equal and of similar proportion seems unstoppable, if amusingly utopian. Will a day come when Tibetan prayer music fits snugly beside un-Christian Heavy Metal? If it does, the question to ask is what we might have lost, not what these musics may have gained. It might seem a little strange to be asking such questions in a magazine where 'access all areas' is the password. What chafes, though, is not the accessibility of any genre. A wider currency of interesting music should always be welcomed. The troubling thing is the imposition of an aesthetic where careless conjunction becomes the norm.

In the UK, one reason why, for instance, jazz seems to be entering a crisis at the moment is its unusual purity of form. Isolated from most of the styles and forms that make up the juice and froth of pop, it suddenly seems grey and effortful to many of the listeners who took it up in the late 80s. The improvised music scene retains its fierce independence, but a spark of interest seems to have been doused by the kaleidoscopic jumble of exotisms which have invaded via the extremities of sound which all manner of Ambient or dance musics have imposed.

In response, concert promoters, festival organisers, record labels, all dashing to expand their briefs, wave in countless divergent spirits, encourage the most outlandish of juxtapositions. You can not look through a festival line-up or a month's programming at some venue without feeling that most of the music is being shoehorned into some prefect's idea of global village détente. As fascinating as some of the results may be, one ancient dictum (99 per cent of everything is shit) seems relatively unscathed by such a liberating approach. What eclecticism is so often used for is a mask to obscure both poverty of imagination and incompetence of execution. Context covers up conceit.

We should all fear the erosion, even the disappearance, of a distilled approach, a refined spirit. Eclecticism is often tied up in bravado, a showing-off of knowledge, a false camaraderie between spirits that were never meant to mingle quite so closely. If restraint or reflection or any kind of selflessness is still to be manifest in music-making, eclecticism must be resisted. There is no need to resort to the puritanical. But it is a short step from compromising individuality in the spirit of co-operation to surrendering identity altogether. □



# *Speaking for* **The Oldie**

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# **Naim Attallah**



*A Quartet Book £15.00*

# Point run

## Get In The Van

By Henry Rollins

2 | 136 | (PBC)

I approached Henry Rollins's record of his days with seminal US punkers Black Flag with anticipation and curiosity — and found myself sickened. The book is at once tedious and perfect, for the very good reason that it is the perfect representation of an aesthetic of tedium: the tortured road diary. Not only is the book highly repetitive, but that which is being repeated is already banal. Day in, day out, Rollins details his graphic murder fantasies, usually directing them at any individual who takes a drink from his pint. This paranoid bloodfest, which thinks itself unique, is symptomatic of the state of rock and of its links with the current Anglo-Saxon obsession with the 'rights of the offended.' As Salman Rushdie recently observed, unlimited rights now seem to be granted to any community or individual who declare themselves 'offended.' The cult of 'rage' (against the machine, sexism, racism, etc.) is all-prevalent in post-Black Flag rock, and it is largely negative and inward-looking. Instead of espousing black culture, whites spend their time accusing other whites of racism. Instead of turning to salsa, rock groups attack other rock groups for not being 'different' enough, and so on.

There are symptoms of this incestuous sickness in *Get In The Van* everywhere you look. Symptomatic is Rollins's notion of cultural subversion somewhere in Switzerland. Black Flag's rhythm guitarist plays a ZZ Top tape to some assembled fans of the fundamentalist punk band The Exploited. 'Wildly,' he announces it as the latter's new album. The

**In this month's books section: Henry Rollins, Lou Reed, Manu Dibango, *Totals* Industrial culture, plus improvising out of the academy**

punks weep, Rollins laughs, and I want to get out of the room. I wish that a modern-day Nietzsche would write *The Rollins Case* instead of *The Wagner Case*, the book in which the German philosopher took sides against the decadent romanticism of Protestant northern Europe and defended the flamboyant pathos of the Mediterranean as represented by Bizet's *Carmen*. Rock has followed a similar course to opera, from grandiose pagan celebration of the mysteries of the universe to today's incestuous, self-referential and egotistic obsessions, and Black Flag, for all their many admirable aspects, have been an essential stepping stone to this latest stage.

SYLVESTRE BALAZARD

## Lou Reed: The Biography

By Victor Bockris

HUTCHINSON (Hbk £17.99)

Victor Bockris keeps a safe distance from his subject in this biography. It's a cut and paste job — Reed isn't directly interviewed — but Bockris has moved in Reed's circles at times in the past, particularly when researching his biographies on Andy Warhol,

William Burroughs and The Velvet Underground. His name is credited against a photo of a smiling, chubby Reed with Burroughs in 1979. After reading an account of a drunken, frighteningly abrasive display at another Burroughs party, one wonders what the conversation was like on either side of the photo. And what tongue-lashings the author himself received.

This hefty, exhaustively researched tome is carried along smartly by Bockris's pithy, pacey style. He chooses 1959 as his year zero, when the 17-year-old Reed's rebellious nature and apparent homosexuality caused his parents to agree to him having electroshock therapy. No need to don the amateur psychologist's hat to see that this only compounded Reed's bad attitude. "For a sarcastic kid who had grown up with buck teeth, braces and a nerd's wardrobe, Lou wasn't doing badly turning himself into the image of a totally perverse psycho," observes Bockris.

It was a deliberate move that set the blueprint for a lifetime of outrage. In the wake of EST, Reed said, "I don't have a personality", but he has an ability to use people to help make himself whole, exploiting their strengths and weaknesses and inevitably discarding them in the cases of John Cale and Warhol, not to his advantage.

Bockris's depiction of Reed is compelling and uncomfortable precisely because the complex strands — of cruelty, sensitivity, truculence, wit and paranoia — are never reconciled. Collaborators are sacked if they get too much attention, albums are removed (to their detriment) by Reed, specifically to highlight himself. There are no prizes for guessing why the VU reformation fizzled out

so quickly.

What the book also reiterates is how musicians inspired by the energy of the 60s to feel they could do anything lost direction in the 70s. Reed desperately wanted to create a poetic rock 'n' roll that had the vision of Baudelaire and the bite of Hubert Selby. The stonies that come out of the cadaverous, speed-fuelled, one-man freakshow of the early 70s — with Reed trying to reconcile why Berlin (which came close to his ideal) could be so slated and Sally Can't Dance (which he thought was "a piece of shit") was a big hit — are compulsive.

"This is fantastic — the worse I am, the more it sells," sneered Reed before getting his revenge with *Metal Machine Music*.

Bockris is of the opinion that Reed is washed out now, alienated (through being alienated) and creatively bankrupt. To hear Reed's undoubtedly caustic riposte to that — and indeed to the entire book — would be the perfect epilogue.

DAVE MORRISON

## Three Kilos Of Coffee

By Manu Dibango with Danielle Rouard

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS (Hbk \$25.50, Pbk £11.25)

For James Joyce, Ireland was the old sow that eats her farrow — for Manu Dibango, Africa treats her creative children similarly. An exile in Europe since 1949, he has become a flagbearer for the music of a continent he loves but cannot live in.

Three Kilos, an autobiography taking us to 1989, shows the saxophonist moving from his early love, jazz, to a style that mixes jazz, funk and African music. He had his first great hit, "Soul Makossa", in 1972, and remains a force for

social and musical mixing, a dominant voice in the diaspora. Like he says, it's not Africa but Paris that feeds modern music. Africa exists in the head.

There are some wonderful passages in Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, in the dawn of independence. "The air was sensually moist. Money, sex, sorcery, and physical strength combined with this capital which was creating its own language and building its own history." Dibango had travelled there to work with Joseph Kabasele and his African Jazz — but to progress, he had to keep moving — sometimes back to Cameroon (a disaster), once to the Cote d'Ivoire, where he directed the national band (a nightmare), mostly back to Europe.

The greatest asset of this book is its honesty, not least about its subject's own failures. Sweeping aside the sentimentality that affects much Western writing on Africa, Dibango casts a cool eye over its fatalism and corruption, but reserves his greatest distastes for African tradition — usually revered in the West as a touchstone of authenticity but attacked here for stifling African creativity and holding the continent back. Words such as 'traditional' and 'local' are used pejoratively back in Cameroon. Manu laments that, "I had no music to listen to. We could only hear traditional music." Another traditional practice, sorcery, drives him from the country.

On the make-up of his music, Dibango is less forthcoming, skimming over his recording career with Kabasele with no mention of specific songs, offering no insight into makossa music, which inspired his greatest hit, making hurried references to an album here, an album there with no clues to their contents or how the music was put together. Danielle Rouard, who assembled this 130 page autobiography from extensive interviews, was keen to let Manu speak for himself, rather than treat him as a research project. She's good on his philosophy, less so on the music.

By the end of the book, Dibango has reconciled some of his opposites as a "Negropolitan" —

the title of his fine album from 1989. He takes part in and celebrates an international culture that goes beyond narrow boundaries and offers Africans a central place in the world. *Three Ideas* puts down his story, and his ideas, in a gripping and readable way.

CHRIS STAPLETON

## Total — Volume Two: The Body

Ed by Robert H King

TDL PRESS (PBK)

The 80s Re/Search archive focused on the body in extremis with the Industrial noise scene of Throbbing Gristle, Swans, etc as its musical analogue. 90s Techno culture, conversely, is technostoc. As writer Erik Davis has argued, it inherits both Augustinian dreams of body transcendence and, in its emphasis on the body as dead meat, the deadly Cartesian binary of the mind/body split.

There's no immediate musical correlation for technosticism, although the candidates are there, and so Robert H King's anthology includes a CD which proposes an equivalent. Some names are familiar (Jovanotti, France, Techno Animal, Lull) others not so well known (Controlled Bleeding, Nocturnal Emissions, Ivan Urvinn). Both musically and textually, it's an uneven volume mixing over-familiar writers from the Re/Search era with equally overpraised characters from the Techno-culture moment. Articles on branding, sado-masochism, preparation and the ecstasies of tattooing are detailed but no longer revelatory. Nor do interviews with Steeler and Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories add that much to what you might know already. That leaves a bitchy interview with the smug Boyd Rice who recounts how the Re/Search mob ripped off his buddies' obsessions with Incredibly Strange Films, only to find themselves burnt in town by Jonathan Ross. Some inconclusive pieces on weird science phenomena such as spontaneous combustion and alien abduction also disappoint.

On the accompanying CD, the tracks that most straightforwardly

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try to correlate the altered states of body ecstasy (all the unknown names) fail just because they're so literal. So Deborah Jaffe's article on sado-masochism has her enacting those rituals on CD and sounding like a lame Soft Cell. The isolationist tracks work best because of their resonance, their distance, which allows you to rehear what you've already read.

The time it's taken King to compile his volume shouldn't have robbed the articles of their surprise (after all, body ecstasy is partly about a war with time conducted in and on the stubbornest and most recalcitrant battlefield of all: the body). But it has, and maybe the self-styled warriors lined up here are more complicit with hipness and the havoc that wreaks than they or King thought they were.

**KODWO ESHIM**

*Total is available from Total Press, PO Box 284, Glasgow G23 5RA*

## New Perspectives In Music

By Roger Sutherland

SUN TAVERN FIELDS 0HBK £300

Visual artists shunned by the gallery brokers drop out of history: oppositional (unsuccessful), 'serious' operators require an armoury of biographies, catalogues, lists. Roger Sutherland is a painter, and this survey of 20th century 'classical' music reflects such art-school methodology. He documents composers and their 'work' with dogged scrupulousness, emphasising dates and technical innovations: it is worlds away from the dialectic between hedonism and sociology that drives pop discourse (from Simon Frith's academia to the consumer service of *Vox* and *Select*). Likewise, his visual analogies recall the musical materialism of the abstract expressionist painter.

Specialising in classical music doesn't mean you have to be a reactionary. The defining moment for Sutherland was the 60s, when composers challenged the institutions of classical music. His crusade is to make the classical world take improvisation seriously (the *New Complexity* — ie

advanced post-60s scored composition — is ignored completely). He favours harsh, Improv (AMM, MEV, GNCL, which he calls explorative and 'leisurely', over whizzbang virtuosic Improv (Company, Zorn, Gayle, Ware, Hession/Wilkinson/Fell — he omits any names), which he calls show-off and 'competitive'.

Sutherland is welcome to his predilections, but his neo-Buddhist 'anti-ego' moralism gets rather wearing. If you do not subscribe to the art school's obsession with procedural innovation, much of the music Sutherland admires can seem dull indeed: prayer meetings pitched versus the broths of populism. Nowadays he works with a group of electronic improvisers called Morphogenesis, seeking to revive the good old days of happenings, scratch orchestras and 'breaking down the boundaries between artist and audience' (Yup, once again, it's as if punk and rap and Techno never happened). And of course, for a music like Sutherland, they didn't. Funny how he fails to notice that his ignorance of such pop-experimental forms mirrors the classical world's distaste for his own take on improvised music.

So *New Perspectives in Music* manfully collates a seemingly endless list of compositional strategies. There are composer biographies at the back, and information about available CDs. Sutherland has published some of these chapters in *Resonance*, journal of the London Musicians Collective. There is a certain shoddiness in the way previously-published essays are recycled without being brought up to date and repetitions of fact are annoyingly frequent (I counted 17 instances).

Lurking behind the deluge of data — too much of it available elsewhere, too little of it germane to any argument except 'this is what happened', and for all its detail far from comprehensive — are some salient points. Though Boulezian serialists and Cageian chanceers fought tooth and nail, both musics ended up emphasising timbre rather than pitch, musical actuality rather than the abstractions of the score.

Sutherland understands that this is the great discovery of 20th century European art music — but refuses to relate it to blues and jazz and rock and popular access to recorded sound (the historical reality of the situation, and conclusive proof of the thesis).

Sutherland applauds the egodential of composers asking orchestral musicians to improvise (a 60s idea that generally resulted in musical ghastliness), but again ignores jazz and rock (genuine alternatives to the 'factory' production of the classical orchestra). He believes in 'everyday life' (huh?), yet the economic reality of reputations, careers and funding never impinges on Sutherland's inventory. His politics are idealist and anarchist, refusing to stoop to the grubby realities of making music happen under capitalism, full of hippy/romantic calls to open us up to the rhythms of nature (Bambi is alive and well and running round the LMC).

The dryness of the book's presentation (what a tedious title!) contradicts its polemical and subversive intent, burying Sutherland's welcome bursts of enthusiasm (for the improvising Stockhausen, for Bernard Parmegiani, for the electronic Xenakis), really the essence of the book.

Still, any tome sporting photographs of contemporary Shaman Bob Cobbing (concrete poet, spouter of *The White Goddess*, banger of drums) and Adam Bohman (the skiffle servant of aural astonishment, conjurer of desk-vibes it would hex a critic to name) has to be a good thing, if only as a vital injection into student reading-lists what might appear dead to a *Wire* reader could well work magic in the academy. Sutherland describes music and ideas that are in danger of being eliminated by classical music's turn to commercialism (Taverner, Martland, Fitkin, etc). Unlike the Morton/Collins Contemporary Composers volume, which surrendered selection to market forces (ie publishers), Sutherland at least has a point of view — one it's worth wading through the specious 'reference book' format to grasp.

**BEN WATSON**



PHOTO: CLAUDE FORSIS



## watch

### Mark Espiner clicks away at the interface between music and interactive media

What do "Castro Haze", "Mania Envelope", "Spunk Worship", "Beast", and "Alloy Balcony And Jets Overhead" mean to you? To Brian Eno they mean *Head Candy* (lon 76896 40005). From the moment you slip on the prismatic glasses (provided with the handy advice that they are "not intended for use as sunglasses or for any other use"), boot up the CD, install the software provided with the disc and prepare yourself for the trip, to the point where you quit, you become a total candy darter. This CD-ROM could be a video, so slight is the interaction required: all you have to do is select a tune, sit back and watch. But the visuals (pictured right) created by Christopher Juul and Doug Jison are stunning, and with the aid of *Head Candy* glasses they multiply and spill out from the screen. On each track you are drawn into a journey through powerful colours which reflect the specially composed Eno soundtrack (featuring Robert Fripp, amongst others). The hardware requirement is a bit cheeky, it demands a powerful Macintosh computer (Quadra upwards), with a PC version due for release in January. It also gives specific instructions for maximum enjoyment of the product. These involve turning off the lights and putting at least seven feet between you and the monitor. If you follow the advice and don't trip your Mac out of the wall by tripping in the dark, the effect is dazzling — a firework kaleidoscope display that is strangely mesmeric. Eno was in there early as regards Ambient interaction and this title shows his potency and ease with the form. (Available now from lon through BMG, price £19.99)

*The Sea Of Tranquility* is a Various Artists audio CD/CD-ROM on Echo

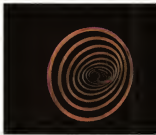
(ESPCD 1). It offers "Orbit" and "His Immortal Sandcastle" amongst others, by artists like Hyperprism, The Voltage Brothers, Gagam and Sonexuno. Some of the music is a bit wishy-washy and with this sampler the stand out track is the data on track one: it's a demo version of a forthcoming Virgin interactive game, *Creature Shock*, which is only playable on a PC. While the graphics are extraordinary and the super-creepy scary monsters lurch with fantastically disturbing animated movement, this game is only a demo and the concept of trying to sell you a game which lends nothing to the music and is simply a marketing tag-on to the album is hugely inept. (Available now on Echo Special Projects through Pinnacle)

The Terminal Futures conference at London's ICA last month set out to further the debate about the many important creative areas of new media, from the "digital aesthetic" to "DIY Media". One discussion on *Subversive Listening* had a very broad approach towards debate, which involved declamations from self-confessed "designer sadist" Stephen Metcalfe who frantically leafed through notes to a short story or (God forbid) a novel. He was cut out by an overlong set from Praxis and Technet, a live PA consisting of soundbites culled from the Internet — sometimes meaningless ("Techno is the possibility of all meaning") sometimes naive ("Judge society by its sounds not by its words") and sometimes charlatan ("Power is a form of entertainment"). None of this provoked discussion. Scanner aka Robin Rimbaud, the host of The Electronic Lounge at the ICA, made a good case never to use a mobile

— or even a cordless — analogue phone, unless you are prepared to risk your conversation featuring in one of his recordings or live sets. With scanning equipment costing as little as £200 in the high street, Scanner can tune into anything from hearing aids to mobile phones. He called it phone preaking — plucking phone conversations from out of the air and laying them against an Ambient soundtrack. Mesmeric sounds appealing to the voyeur (aureur?) in us all? The natural extension of music — telling stories of true lives? Maybe. But think about who else might be listening to you out there and whether you have any control over who records and manipulates your voice.

Meanwhile the Internet is ever expanding with record labels setting up sites. Go! Discs are the latest to have put their artists on the World Wide Web. I had great fun looking at a map of Porthead while listening to the band's new single and downloading a short sound file of Paul Weller's new single, a cover of The Beatles' "Sexy Sadie". You can find it on <http://www.go!discs.co.uk/go!discs/>.

In addition, Yello, those merry Electro-pranksters, have also decamped to sites on both the Internet (World Wide Web) and CompuServe networks. At both sites you can download information on the group's recent *Zebra* album, and grab a short sequence from the video of the "How Now" single as well as four of the track's original samples. You can then E-mail the group to tell them what you think about it all. Contact "Yello On The Net" at: World Wide Web, <url://yello.space.net/yello>, or CompuServe: log into the recording industry and Forum via "Go Polygram". □



# SOUND

## check

### December winners:

BYOB, Bill Dixon, Shane MacGowan, Sabres Of Paradise

### In soundcheck:

Brand Nubian, DJ Krush, Dog Faced Hermans, Da Lench Mob, Dub Syndicate, Bill Frisell, Guided By Voices, Barry Guy, The Irresistible Force, Joshua Redman, Organum, Lisa Germano, Peter Maxwell Davies, Pete Namlook, New Order, Nirvana, Eddie Palmien, Parliament, Stockhausen and more..

### In brief:

Deconstructing the December dancefloor, Hot wiring the new Electronica

### In outline:

Firing the classical music canon; excavating the sound of Senegal



### WINNER

wake me up before you Go-Go

**BYOB**  
**BYOB**

13 RECORDS/RYKO D06C RCD10310 CD

Michael Ivey is teasing us with the acronym BYOB; it could stand for "Bring Your Own Bottle Or Butt Or Brain." The question, "Bastard youth of what?" is printed beside a baby's dummy on the back sleeve. The cool, deep-plunge

bass that starts the record promises well, and the carefully sequenced 46 minutes that follow just get better and better. Apparently, Ivey plans to run this project alongside his rap group DC Basehead.

Go-Go is the Washington DC brand of funk, based on live musicianship and marathon live shows (Chuck Brown & The Soul Searchers, early Trouble Funk, The Jankyard Band — Gil Scott-Heron could be counted as a fellow traveller). On BYOB, Michael Ivey

preserves its slinky, suggestive swing and serious bass, but polishes up the sounds, making them playful and hi-tech. He's recreated Go-Go in the virtual space of the HipHop studio.

The opening "Too Good To Let Go" is a bewitching smoocher, sung achingly by Justine Hall. This is no 'guns and hos' record. This segues into "Ramifications Of Shaking One's Ass", a four-way telephone conference between partygoers discussing, "What is this BYOB thing, anyway?" One of the women exclaims how sick she is of "all these niggers callin' us bitches", while an unreconstructed homeboy declares it'll be "wack" and that it probably stands for "bring your own bitch" anyway. All this puts black colloquial felicity up against funky rhythms as an alternative to in-your-face rhyming and cursing. Ivey is opening a window on the debates in the community, evincing a reflexive self-awareness rare in any genre. At the same time he seduces our feet with the genuine article. For those of us who felt that the De La Soul 'alternative' to hardcore rap was worthy but ineffectual, this is a godsend. The rap-attacking, money-making gangsta stereotype here is hilarious and razor-sharp (but Ivey is no fool: Ice T figures alongside George Clinton and Chuck Brown in the thanks-list).

Ivey's care to create a suite out of his different songs recalls soul multi-instrumentalists Marvin Gaye and Andre Lewis. There are weird, experimental moments ("Outerspacegethring") — followed by renewed debate among our foursome), and an incredibly sophisticated recasting of soul jazz ("Go Jazz Go") — eat your heart out, M-Base! BYOB hits just the right spot between "fuck it, let's dance" and politically-informed

impatience with clichés

The constant stress on novelty in a competitive, consumer culture has a tendency to erase history, eliminate any adult perspective (wey outlinks that by presenting us with a new music that asserts racial identity and underclass solidarity (in "Where Ya Going To?" he even mentions the blues). Humour, casualness, musicianship, politics (snotty school girls Beth and Cheryl calling the Statue of Liber-ass-ty "a big green bee-eh") — and always the amazing Go-Go beat which fills space with Latin percussion while never straying from The Funk. The good time record of 1994!

**BEN WATSON**

## WINNER

destination out

**Bill Dixon  
Vade Mecum**

SOUL, NOTE 121208 CD

Approaching the age of 70,

trumpet and flugelhorn improviser Bill Dixon has stripped his sombre, mordant language down to its most moving and incisive components. The result is as poignant as free music should be — a conversation with the moment itself, in which the sense lies deep in the whole scheme of sound and silence. Dixon likes the acoustic bass so much he uses more than one wherever possible, and this new quartet features both Barry Guy and William Parker, producing a stunning array of densities and levels of momentum in a duo that tends to function, whether intentionally or not, as a central motor for the band, responding agilely as Dixon presses and releases the gas pedal. It is not that they are failing to contribute their own imagination and impetus to the improvisations, but that they respond to the leader's understated strength with such sensitivity and speed, that they virtually combine in their dynamism. The quartet is completed by drummer Tony Oxley, whose confident and

supportive flow of scratching and clattering are exactly what is needed in this band of unusually distinct roles.

Dixon's own trumpet and, particularly, flugelhorn work has an ectoplasmic, disembodied quality, leading the group with short, fractured lines and single notes, played softly and occasionally given a spooky echo by the basses. It is a beautiful, and hardly unorthodox, tone — fluid and airy, out shaped with a myriad of nuances and superbly controlled reminders of the growls and screams he produced in his work with Cecil Taylor.

The title track is a masterpiece of cool intensity and melancholic introspection, powered by a busy, confident Oxley, but steered by Dixon's lean, angular musical poetry. "Pellucity" is well titled, and stands out for the clarity of its dignified despondency, while "Anamorphosis" comes on hard — the distortion referred to in the title obvious in Dixon's smeared buzzing brass. Music of such prolonged strength and focus is rare indeed.

**LINTON CRISWICK**

## WINNER

Irish folk wailer

**Shane MacGowan And  
The Popes  
The Snake**

ZTT 4509 98104 CD/CDLP

England, just in case you'd forgotten, is still a 'land without music', ie without the vigorous folk tradition of, for instance, Ireland, Spain or Zimbabwe. Those musicians who are aware both of this fact and of just what culture they consequently adopt find themselves on a much surer footing than the rest. Thus, it is the drabdest part of the indie pop contingent which continues to delude itself with stories that The Kinks and The Who, those 'quintessentially English bands', had no special interest in rock 'n' roll, a horrible Yankee invention. Thus Shane MacGowan, for all the evidence we've got, probably is an Irish citizen by now. And so he should be, for there is something profoundly Catholic (colourful and

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contemptuous of restraint) and republican (that mingling of high art and low life) in the songs of the former Pogues singer. It is symptomatic that the only instance in the course of this first solo album where MacGowan doesn't take the Emerald Isle as a setting is a spooky "Mexican Funeral In Paris" that he finds himself interpreting. See? Catholic and Republican. That no other songwriter in their right English mind would allow themselves to pen such irony-free lines as, "Now I'd pray for a single less from her to be lashed and crucified" defies argument, nor would they allow themselves to punctuate an account of the disintegration of the country with gleeful choruses of "I might have fucked your missus but I never fucked your daughter!"

To tell the truth, there are one or two instances in the album when Shane seems closer to a stateless nihilism, as in "The Snake With Eyes Of Garnet", which is to be passed on "Til all mankind is free", and which I choose to read as celebrating the liberating power of Satan, a refreshing idea in an Irish folk context. Then again Satanism — also hovering over "The Church Of The Holy Spook" — is a rather Catholic anti-tradition, shaming as it does the Roman Church's taste for incense, vivid colours and sensual music.

The Snake is the work of Shane MacGowan in full possession of his redeeming powers, at once pagan and sentimental, away from all pettiness.

SYLVESTER BALAZARD

## WINNER

paradise regained

### Sabres Of Paradise Haunted Dancehall

WARP WAPCD 26 CD

### Technova Tantric Steps

SABRES OF PARADISE SOP 002CD CD

Modern urban life is permeated by strange and random fusions — car radio soundclashes, radio dial overlays and the overlapping

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overload of music festivals. Musicians plough off to the furthest margins in search of the oddest ideas only to reappear, joining forces with the strangest allies to fight racism or the Criminal Justice Bill. This is the spirit of *Haunted Dancehall*!

If an apology was required for the overdressed turgidity of last year's *Sabresonic*, the album would more than suffice. *Haunted Dancehall* unclogs, throws out and strips down The Sabres' sound. Music is always at its most exciting when it bursts forth from our narrow categories and the disc certainly does that. Without the presence of our usual landmarks we're forced to engage with their ideas, plumbing the nooks of this troglodyte's warren.

From the metallic bhanga of "Bubble And Side" to the cyber-soul of "Planet D", an eerie dub trips through your speakers, haunting you with its edgy abrasiveness. Melodies are rare and the message seems to be that music is every bit as malleable as you want to make it. Duane Eddy's guitar can be written into spaghetti dub and any two styles can be made to cohere, from TripHop to Prog rock, but if you don't like the results you can just screw them up and chuck them away, as they do with the intro to "Wilmot".

Had Andrew Weatherall, The Sabres' one man music-machine, substituted "Dancefloor" for "Dancehall", he'd have thrown the whole project in one fatal slip, as it is the album title is perfect for this cavernous glide through the ages and spaces of dancepop, the disc somehow managing to sound like the last record of the 20th century and the first of the 21st. Music is never something we can completely reinvent and any progressions must begin in the past, but as *Haunted Dancehall* so splendidly shows, this needn't stunt its development.

Technova's *Tantric Steps* seems somewhat harder to traverse. All I know about Technova is that the man behind the music has a body covered in tattoos. Not a lot of help, I know — especially when the music he produces seems more an attempt at a spiritual exercise than a shot at stylistic

innovation. The incantation on "Data" refers to a "vulnerable mortality when we did lose the power of magic." Perhaps this is what he would have us regain.

Musically, what's on offer is no less intense. Pouring forth like a cloud of incense, *Tantric Steps* is an organic symphony of swampy psychedelia where recurring themes overlay Acid-trance with litig lines of dub, tribal drumming, Eastern chanting and some of the fiercest didgeridooing I've ever heard. I'm tempted to mention System 7, except that this might be misleading. Technova are mesmeric rather than merely Ambient and *Tantric Steps* doesn't lose the mind so much as confound it through a set of New Age rituals. Beautiful but strange.

SUSAN MASTERS

## soundcheck

### Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra The Morlocks And Other Pieces RMP 61 CD

Three decades as the titular head of The Globe Unity Orchestra, that community of hardcore improvisors, apparently has not fulfilled all of Alexander Von Schlippenbach's orchestral ambitions. In 1988 he founded the Berlin Contemporary Jazz Orchestra as an informal workshop to explore the more ambiguous terrain between notated and spontaneously conceived music. In concert they've played scores by Carla Bley and Willem Breuker, a 1989 ECM disc interpreted pieces by Kenny Wheeler and Misha Mengelberg. This time it's an all-Schlippenbach program, giving us some idea of the breadth of his compositional attitudes.

Don't get the wrong idea, he's not looking for total authority. Improvisation remains a key ingredient in Schlippenbach's design. There's an ongoing tension between passages for full orchestra and slippery, small scale





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improvisations, since the latter often redirect the shape and feel of the composed music; they are more interludes than solos. In "Rigaudon No 2 Aus Der Wasserstoffmusik" the orchestral parts are graphic symbols to which the players supply the notes. Schlippenbach directs the flow and movement in a manner similar to Butch Morris's "conductions." Even notated repetitious phrases in "The Morlocks" are subject to "variational drift" by the individual players, and when juxtaposed against the incessant clatter of prepared piano the result is that of a music box run amok.

At times Schlippenbach takes a firmer hand. "Contrareflection" is a mini-concerto for saxophone Evan Parker (with an explosive cadenza), and there's a consistency of mood and detail throughout: "Marco Di Saurmo" not dissimilar to that of the darker moments of Schoenberg's Pelleas And Melisande. The band even swings, with a kind of Germanic heft. Perhaps paradoxically, Schlippenbach the composer deserves the most credit for the music's unpredictability.

**ART LANGE**

## Roy Bookbinder Live Book

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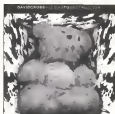
VERVE GITANES 523 118 CD

## Sherman Robertson I'm The Man

CODE BLUE 4509 95726 CD

There's something about Roy Bookbinder's idealistic steel-rimmed glasses and luxuriant Richard Brautigan beerstrainer moustache which yells 'folkie', with its unspoken code 'boring.' But on *Live Book*, a recording of a live show from 1993, Bookbinder's acoustic guitar weaves a web of warm, litig East Coast blues ticks over which he sings songs which tickle the ear and spin yarns.

Stories of his meetings with old-time songsters Gary Davis and Pink Anderson sit side by side with reminiscences of Ireland, Athens and Spartanburg, Carolina, all



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related with a prissy confidentiality that is sustained across the 62 minutes playing time of the disc — which is 59 minutes less than it took The Reverend Davis to get religion upon his arrival in New York City, if you believe Bookbinder's anecdote. The man happens to be white, doesn't try to sound black, yet has assimilated the Carolina blues tradition to the extent that his versions of "Candy Man Blues" and "In The Jailhouse Now" are simply vests to old friends. This excellent CD is the new blues release of the year so far.

"My baby's got the power, she's stronger than the US Navy," asserts Joe Louis Walker as he sails into his new JLW album. Walker and his Boss Talkers have similar pussance, if not yet the same amount of worldwide influence: this latter can only be a matter of time for, virtually alone among the younger generation of blues artists, he plays and sings like the blues is still a living, breathing thing (rather than an exhibit in a museum). On "Inner City Man", his singing and guitar playing have an intensity verging on incandescence, but then he and the boys can also shoot through the Don Gardner and Deedee Ford cliche "I Need Your Loving" and remind us that R&B should sometimes be fun.

The band, augmented by The Tower Of Power horns and sometimes by The Gospel Hummingbirds, rocks hard without apparently striving to do so, and on a track such as the beefy "Can't Get You Off My Mind" their playing is an amalgam of fire and precision. On the final track, Walker modishly unplugs and duets with mouth harp maestro James Cotton on the walking blues "Goin' To Canada" and is just as impressive as on the electric cuts. He's a whole highway ahead of the competition.

Which might include Sherman Robertson, an affable, tea-drinking Texan in his early forties who has played soul, blues and zydeco in his time and who now joins the long and distinguished list of artists produced by Mike Vernon. *I'm The Man*, released on Vernon's new Code Blue label, depicts a bluesman sharpened and honed on a hundred Southern roadhouse stages. A dozen punchy numbers

showcase his high, soulful vocals and fluid, driving guitar lines. Most cuts have a contemporary flavour, the pick of them being "Special Kind Of Loving", with its free-flowing and climactic guitar solo, but then Robertson reaches into his trick bag and pulls out "Vacating The Blues", an archetypal Texas shuffle on which his playing evokes the rapid-fire, sizzling-ice style of Albert Collins.

**MIKE ATHERTON**

## David Cross Testing To Destruction

RED HOT COR 107 CD

## Old Fruit That's What I Call Now Music

FRUCTOSE FRUCTO 001 CD

## U Totem Strange Attractors

CUNEIFORM RUNE 66 CD

David Cross played violin and mellotron in King Crimson's most inventive line-up, the one that made three classic progressive rock albums in the early 70s, including *Storeless And Bible Book*. In 1974 he doffed the gold suit to study jazz and traditional Irish music, later writing for theatre and dance companies. *Testing To Destruction* is his third album, and it remains true to his Prog rock roots, though at times it comes perilously close to pomp rock (a thin dividing line). The five-piece is tight and especially fierce on "Learning Curve" and "Calamity" where Paul Clark's gritty guitar gets solo space and John Dillon's dramatic vocals sometimes recall John Wetton's for Asia and UK. Dan Maurer is a fine drummer whose imaginative pulse-shifts take these compositions up a notch or two. Cross vanes the violin's traditional textures with some dissonant electronic treatments. This album won't win him a host of new admirers in Britain but its determined, anti-fashionable stance is admirable.

Whimsy has always found a niche in British Prog rock. Tries like "Dance Of The Spem", "The Bastard Octopus" and "Once A Moose. Always A Moose" tell you where London-based Old Fruit are coming from. Yes, they're a whacky

bunch and most of their short (not quite 20 minutes) debut positively screams with silliness. If you were a fan of the Canterbury scene, The Hissos, Mehead or Slump, there's something in it for you. But man can't live by whimsy alone, and despite some neat idiomatic fluctuations, the humour gets overripe before long.

Unlike the near moribund British progressive scene, the situation was healthier in America during the 80s, where groups like Suu's, Motor Totemist Guild and Thinking Plague were producing the most advanced rock from jazz, contemporary classical and non-Western influences. U Totem spring from collaborations between members of Suu's and Mother Totemist Guild in the late 80s. Strange Attraction, their second release, is based on bassist James Gingsby's novella, printed here in its entirety — the compositions are his, too. Vocalist Emily Hay carries the narrative in poignant tones reminiscent of Dagmar Krause's upper register, the woodwind and keyboard passages have the metrical intricacy of Zappa's sylvan pieces. These are wonderfully crafted compositions, executed with precision and attention to detail. Progressive rock at its most challenging and most exciting.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

## Deutsch Nepal Tolerance

STALPLAAT STCO 067 CD

## baby Labyrinthian Lucid

AETERA (NO NUMBER) CD

## Starfish Pool Chill Out 'N Confused

NOVA ZEPHIA NZ 016 CD

Before the 'A' word descends on these discs and absorbs them into its ill-defined and collapsing bulk, it'd like to plead in their defence. The post-Techno appropriation of both the word and the idea of Ambient has had a profound effect on recent music writing and marketing. It has also obscured numerous musical lines of enquiry which reach back well past Eno's infamous Ambient watershed moment and which continue to develop ideas that go as far back as the Futurists.

Deutsch Nepal's *Tolerance* springs from the 80s' romance with brooding post-Industrial music. From Mannetti to Faust, Zoviet France, Cabaret Voltaire, Einstürzende Neubauten, This Heat, etc, there is a lineage of mechanist motifs and the emotive balance of threat and promise. Samplers enabled the looping of the most innocuous sound fragment into an unsettling engine of rhythm. This facility ignited a mass of machine-referenced soundscaping, some of which headed for the dancelloor and some toward a mystification of nostalgic, ritualised futurism. With *Tolerance*, Deutsch Nepal pursue the more portentous, barren side of the technological ritual with a series of structures referencing rhythms of speech, film and geology. There is a strong whiff of the occult about this work as well as something mannerist and vividly, willfully morbid.

*Lucid* was presented to me as 'Ambient from Seattle' (highly limiting enough) by the improbably named baby Labyrinthian. It contains 31

pieces of engaging, poignant music. I guess if you took L7 or Nirvana and forced them to play underwater at the threshold of audibility it could sound like this. Lots of somnambulant guitar and tentative vocalizing in a bath of woolly lo-tech recorded sounds. If a luddite fetish with analogue sound and low resolution vinyl is part of the zeitgeist then *Lucid* could be a millennial album! There are some structural similarities to Faust's *Tapes* — some of that group's lo-tech quirkiness — but *Lucid* lacks the generous humour and ebullience of Faust. I like this album a lot, though it does exude a kind of viscous lethargy which, after 75 minutes, has sucked you into near immobility.

Recently listening to Thomas Koner's *Permafrost*, I found that by the end of the disc my sense of aural perspective was so altered that the music seemed to continue in the sounds around me. Tube trains passing beneath the building, distant boilers, the air conditioning, and the elevator engines had been pulled into concert. This effect lasted for about 40 minutes during which I could not get anything to return to its 'normal position' in the 'me' of my flat.

The exploration of the peripheries of sound perception also has a history which twins with that of dronal minimalism and some ritual and ascetic uses of sound such as *suken kutsu* (Japanese lythophone installed into a garden and sounded by a controlled drip of water). Knowingly or otherwise, Starfish Pool connect with that tradition. Everything about this album seemed dubious to me, from the

title *Chill Out 'N Confused* to the textbook whiff of the cover art (flowers, children, naive painting, etc). I'm glad I didn't trust my instincts on this one. This turns out to be a highly skilled series of soundscapes blending field recordings and subtle mixing of electronic and acoustic instruments. A lot of it feels like a knowing, even ironic look at the idea of chill out music with some cute reversals of rhythm and atmosphere, frenched hi-hat patterns at the edge of the mix with waves of atmosphere in the foreground. Regardless of how this work came to be, it is worth hearing as something which well transcends its chosen genre.

PAUL SCHUTTE

## Digable Planets Blowout Bomb

PENDULUM/1243 830654 COM/CGLP

## Brand Nubian Everything Is Everything

ELEKTRA/WARNERS 7559 61682 CD

Rather than constructing their political identities as the prophets of a holy war or as morally justified criminals, the Brooklyn-based rappers Digable Planets see themselves as the "creamy spies" of their own blaxploitation flick. Riding black politics for all they're worth, Butterfly, Doodiebug and Ladybug posit Afro picks, baggy jeans, and 'Tims' as both the symbols of and tools for a black cultural nationalism. Like Cleopatra Jones or John Shaft, fly threads and phat beats are essential in their quest to uplift the community.

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bohemian from their debut album. The Digables now see themselves as an "intercommunal sound service" for a very specific audience of African-Americans. On "Borough Check", The Planets (with Gang Starr's Guru) wax rhapsodic about Brooklyn, but the groove is so laconic and the references so arcane that the song becomes menacingly singular. It is an alienating soundscape: the beats are hollow and blunted, there are no hooks as galvanizing as "Cool Like Dat" and the rhymes are still as obscure as ever with coded lyrics like "makin' bacon" (ie killing police) delivered so off-the-cuff as to render them almost meaningless. Unlike the cinematic violence of gangsta rap, which is spectacular whether you like it or not, the success (or failure?) of Digable Planets to create a soundworld that is disconcerting to whites is dependent upon your effort to scratch beneath the album's patina of suave jazziness and hipster slang.

Where Digable Planets use style to communicate political ideas, Brand Nubian merely use melodrama. Their attempts to create sweeping epics come off strained with adenoidal, R&B voices singing uncomfortable platitudes like "Some motherfuckers understand what you feel/Cas it's a Nubian jam and everything's real", while "Hold On", with its "Holding Back The Years" sample, drowns in tear-jerking cliché. The scabrous Five Percenter (a militant wing of the Nation Of Islam) rhetoric of the first two records has been toned down, but Lord Jamar and Sadat X still seem capable only of ad hominem homilies. The beats are too easy and the rhymes are stale. Brand Nubian are stuck inside one of their own loops, where all of HipHop's redundancies can do nothing but scavenge from themselves.

PETER SHAPIRO

## DJ Krush Strictly Turntablized

MO WAX HQ CDS CD

Strictly Turntablized [sic] suggests a music far removed from the tag of Ambient HipHop that has trailed



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DJ Krush for the last couple of years. Wiping away lyrics hasn't untethered HipHop's Spartan classroom, so that it succumbs to wind and withering, storm and light. On the contrary, Krush is far more obsessed with locked grooves and repetition than either the Death Row axis or the post-Pete Rock school of lushious realism. And since his breaks and scratchadelic skidmarks are fervently old school, Turntablized is as much about reaffirming allegiance as it is about bursting beyond them. So if you want Ambience check Warren G or Craig Mack, this way, however, lie monsters.

The excellent single "Kemuri" is the clue. Krush is obsessed by heavy weather, by atmospheres of dread that churn and broil over drum loops that snap tight, perpetually going nowhere. That Jon Hassell-esque nose which twists and funnels like a chromium plated whirpool all through "Kemuri" drops up again on "Fucked Up Pendulum", this time as a monstrous inhalation, as if we're inside the storm. Krush replaces narrative and info-density with stasis and brooding, a nameless environmental unease that crackles and never resolves itself. Moans and yells, groans and sighs which haunt the backstage of, say, Wu Tang Qian here move to the foreground. "To The Infinity" is a torture rack of a track, strangely exhilarating in the way its faint crackle and unhelmich tapes shudder and recoil back in on themselves. "The Nightmare Of Ughs" plays this for gillows laughs, interspersing Hong Kong Phooey screams over a howling refrain of a guitar bent double in back pain. Even on "Dig This Vibe", where vibes flutter and backward synths sport and frolic, there's still an iron hand to his beats.

Turntablized is a short record because Krush doesn't believe in either progression or evolution, the words usually applied to him. His music is brilliantly, militantly goes nowhere.

KODWO ESRUN

## Dog Faced Hermans Those Deep Buds

KONKURREL K155C CD

## B Sheds For The Poor The Wild Goose Chase

NO WAVE CDNW CDS CD

If Fairport Convention hadn't already beaten them to it, the most apt title for Dog Faced Hermans' latest collection of rants and raves would have been *What We Did On Our Holidays*. For Those Deep Buds, DFH chase to spend their summer in the wilds of Rochdale, Lancashire in the company of Breeders/Moonshake/My Bloody Valentine producer Guy Fesen. Together they rented a studio and attempted to rub some of the grittiness of the landscape into the recording process.

For the most part they have succeeded, and unlike such previous records as *Hum Of Life* and the joyously hyperactive live *Bump And Swing*, this one is attached to a pendulum that dares to swing in a slightly different direction. By shaking themselves free from their usual surroundings they have been rewarded with a new creative fervour that urges Andy's guitar to ring a little harder, Colin's bass to howl and hiccups more violently, Wilf's percussion and Gert-Jan's live sound to split the sky while Marion's energetic and subtle trumpet playing sends more than just the odd fleck of plaster fluttering down from the ceiling.

The songs themselves, however, are locked in the familiar punky political prose style of previous records, featuring put-downs of mega-powerful German car companies, pot-shots at creepy war criminals, and the occasional cry of outrage from the band concerning the state of human rights. Nothing we haven't already heard and hung our heads in shame about before. None of this detracts from Dog Faced Hermans' music, which steamrollers along like The Ex jamming with The Willem Breuker Kollektief and what sounds astonishingly like Bjork between the vocal wheel of "Volkswagen", which is undoubtedly the most accessible track of the set. Those Deep Buds is an

impressive lurch forward musically that comes equipped with a beautiful cover photograph of a Crayfish squid.

If Manoni's Björk impersonation on "Volskswagen" causes a groan of instant recognition, then B Shops For The Poor crooner Louise Pett's equally unintentional tribute to Dagmar Krause will have you dusting down that long forgotten copy of Siapp Happy/Henry Cow's *Desperate Straights LP* for comparison. Louise is also responsible for the lyrics on *The Wild Goose Chase*, a work that is based on the 1937 novel of the same name by Rex Warner. How important it is to have read the book before tuning in to B Shops' musical mind-movie is not made clear, and so it is up to the listener to wrestle some kind of meaning out of these solemn, stabbing songs that are punctuated with blasts of slippery sax, bass explosion and guitar and computer noodling.

Although overlong, much of *The Wild Goose Chase* is curiously seductive and thrilling, but in the end it is sheer exhaustion that makes you hit the "Stop" button. By the time you reach "Fictional," the longing for this epic to reach a satisfying climax becomes unbearable — and there are still another five tracks to come. Less would have certainly meant much more in this particular case.

EDWIN POUNCEY

### **Alou Fane's Fote Mocooba** **Kamalan N'Gony — Dozon N'Goni**

DAKAR SOUND DISCOS CD

Alou Fane is singer with Zani Diabate's Bambara-funk troupe Super Djata, who have more claim than most to being the greatest band in Mali. Super Djata made their mark by transposing traditional Bambara music (which many listeners will know as the prime source of Marrakesh Gnawa trance-healing music) to electric instruments, drum kit and saxophones to quite brilliant effect. Fane reverses the process here by returning to a largely acoustic setup — though electric guitars and

keyboards are used in moderation if anything this music is even more powerful — dense, richly woven string-based patterns of statement and restatement, call and response, at once complex enough to demand detailed musical analysis, and straightforward enough to form simple, direct funk. Fane's wonderful yelping vocal dance steps free as the wind over the bubbling rhythms, it reminds me a little of the hoarse beauty of bluesgrass granddaddy Bill Monroe's lonesome country howling, and is every bit as affecting.

Ali Farka Touré's *The Source* (World Circuit), Baaba Maal's *Bayo* (Mango) and Oumou Sangaré's *Ko Sro* (World Circuit) might be the closest reference points for anyone (everyone?) unfamiliar with Fane, and the album is easily the equal of any of these great records, though his sound is much more rooted in a single culture than Maal's and is more rhythmically dynamic and hypnotically forceful than any of them. Not only the best Malian album for a long time, but easily one of the most convincing recordings of acoustic African music ever to have appeared on CD.

RICHARD SCOTT

### **Prince Far I** **Cry Tuff Dub Encounters** **Chatter One**

DANCECETERA RE129 CD

### **Ruts DC** **Rhythm Collision Dub**

DANCECETERA RE151 CD

### **Dub Syndicate** **One Way System**

DANCECETERA DANCE 115 CD

Dub, like most other things of value, resists easy categorisation, the sort of analysis so beloved of — well, music critics for a start. While this is also true of pretty much any music you'd ever want to listen to, dub is different: one can point to techniques, originators, histories, but all this is to miss the point that dub is about attitude. To be more precise, it's about the very peculiar notion that music exists to be deconstructed and ripped apart,

that somewhere among the dunky reverberants and bazzes, Heath Robinson echo chambers, this mutant music acquires a new meaning, a more intense spirituality than its progenitor. That's one theory; there's another which suggests that dub — in its original incarnation of the version — is simply a production technique designed to extend the shelf life of popular rhythms by milling them for all they were worth, and getting Jamaican youth to shell out a dozen or more times for what was essentially the same tune. This tension between culture and product is nothing new, but the bastardization of dub — via the cult of the remix — has taken the degradation to new extremes.

There's no sense of ambiguity with Prince Far I in his tragically short career: he established himself as a massive talent, while his early association with Adrian Sherwood brought him recognition from the assorted punks and hippies turned on to reggae through On-U Sound. Now 16 years old, *Cry Tuff Dub* is still a brilliant set. Far I's unique, gruff vocal styling, with its unexpected melodic touches, restrained use of trickery and ability to create space in music, is augmented by some inspired overdubbing from Sherwood.

One of the brighter products of the (post-punk) late 70s was the willingness of white 'rock' groups to experiment with black styles and rhythms. There was *The Clash*, for whom dub was an ideal partner for their (self-) righteous style and vocal stylisation — "Bank Robber", their collaboration with Mikey Dread, remains a milestone

in white boy posturing and self-mythologising (though it still sounds good) — and there were the likes of A Certain Ratio and Cabaret Voltaire, experimenting at the outer limits of funk abstraction. And then there was *The Ruts*, doomed to live in the shadow of *The Clash*, then losing their lead singer to heroin just as their star was waxing. The Ruts are one of music's 'what if's'. To judge from *Rhythm Collision Dub*, a reworking by Anna Dubmeister Neil Fraser of Ruts DC's only album, they deserved better. Fraser, aka Mad Professor, picks up on the surprisingly soulful feel of the songs — at times, there's more than a hint of Augustus Pablo — and never lets his experimentation swamp the spiritual vibe. While "Weak Heart" certainly has strong overtones of *The Clash*, the most successful cuts are those such as "Push Yourself" and "Accusation", where the group experimented with the stripped-down industrial funk that *The Gang Of Four* practically trademarked in Fraser's hands, and with the age-prop lyrics now more echoed suggestions, the songs become far more powerful. The sound of music that really believes in itself: all told, a remarkable surprise.

16 years on from *Cry Tuff*, Adrian Sherwood remains a pioneering musical spirit, willing to take impossible sonic gambles, risks which invariably pay off. *One Way System* sees him and Dub Syndicate — a fantastically strong line-up — going way into uncharted territory. Sherwood long ago transcended the "funny sounds" school of dub: now, it's more to do with understanding that music



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exists as much in the spaces between sounds as in the sounds themselves, as he masterfully shifts temporal and spatial perceptions. What's missing, crucially, is any sense of a centre from which this music has evolved. Brilliant, inventive, but cold, this is an easy album to admire, but difficult to like.

DAVID LUBICH

**Bill Frisell/Victor Bruce Godsey/Brian Ales**  
**Safety in Numbers/American Blood**  
 VERABRA 2064 CD

**Joe Morris Trio**  
**Symbolic Gesture**  
 SOUL NOTE 121204 CD

**Krakatau**  
**Natinala**  
 ECM 1259 CD

American (and Finnish) guitars, seeking new light.

Frisell's been on this course a long time now, and the Verabira CD is one of his interesting one-offs, probably best heard no more than once. Half the CD is a single guitar improvisation, sampled and enhanced by sampler/enhancer Ales, and abetted with a few judicious ukelele and banjo overdubs from Bill. If you can imagine a kind of rural Industrial Ambient Techno (no, I'm not sure I can either), then this sounds something like that. Ales splinters Frisell's playing into shards of teeth-gritting noise or bouncy, neurotic riffs, and although there are ten tracks, it comes out as a diverting sort of jigsaw. No matter how nasty he tries to be, Bill can never really hide his whimsical streak.

Mind you, he struggles a bit on the second half, where the mellifluous guitars bang up against the spoken poetry of Godsey. Probably sounds all right in a smoke-filled Brooklyn basement, but not in my living room.

Those of you entranced into the Joe Morris CD by 'New Hendrix' hosannas might be bemused to find such a quiet, temperate, thoughtful hour of trio music. This is



a low-power trio. Nate McBride (bass) and Curt Newton (drums) patter and scurry in the background, never raising their voices much. Newton might almost be playing with knitting needles for sticks at some points, and McBride is often content to be subliminal. They can swing when they want to — "Lowell's House" grooves along with some conviction — but it's Morris's patient, intricate playing that sets the tone, accurately described in the notes as "like watching a spider create a web strand by strand". He has more in common with Wayne Marsh than Sonny Sharrock: a flat, unambiguous tone takes the focus off how he plays and moves it to individual phrases, every tiny inflection in the line. Though it can sometimes sound quite joyful, Morris is looking for concentration over a long haul: his improvisations are like a single, massively distended line. Music to watch the stars that play with Laughing Sam's dice by.

Meanwhile, back in Finland Krakatau continue their desolate trek across Europe's beleaguered art music with a further instalment of the strong, austere group music that surfaced on their previous Volcan Album. Raoul Björkenheim is as much in debt to Geeser Butler as he is to any jazz guitar god, and those slow, thunderous lines and riffs that seem like chunks of carved stone are a suitably gothic presence alongside the equally grim saxophones of Jone Takamäki. The 12 minutes of "Sarajevu" (where else?) are about as hardcore as this sort of thing gets, but don't expect continuous uproar: the group can make a sotto voice growl as meaningful as a full-blown assault. Very good.

RICHARD COOK

ECM, Verabira: through New Note

**Chocolate Fireguard: Deiterium, PO**  
**Box 1288, Gerrard's Cross SL9**  
**0AAN**

**Klangbilder: through Vital/SAM**

**Matador: through WEA**

**Beggars Banquet: through**  
**RTM/Pinnacle**

**Intakt: through Cadillac, Impetus,**  
**These**

**Playa: through Cadillac**

world rhythms, free jazz blow-outs and Bitches Brew-style bass clatters. He has a drummer (David Revelle), but frequently loops rhythms, building up tracks in the studio.

Greene has good intentions, but the music keeps falling short. It's intriguing to work out why individual musical autonomy does not guarantee failure (look at Mandrill's Motown classics, all realised by one man in the studio) nor does being inspired by other people's records (look at The Rolling Stones emulating Muddy Waters), but here the combination is wrong. "Culture Of Complaint" tries for the majesty of The Decoding Society, "Conversations With Julian Dexter" is reminiscent of Last Exit, "Less Than One" uses a North African sample but has none of the understanding of lopsided rhythms that characterise Bournonese Quail. Greene is borrowing postures, not getting inside his material.

Aloys Kott (bass) and Peter Essold (drums), as the rhythmic unit for Blue Box and The Jungle Pilots, have proved that Last Exit are not the only people that can combine rock drive with free jazz outreach — likewise Pinski Zoo. They achieve this by sweating it out live. The manipulations of the studio seem unsuitable for the intimacies Greene craves. The West Coast instrumental rock band Pell Mell achieved great results by exchanging tracks in the past, Greene sounds like he needs some input from other people before he's ready to recollect in tranquility and produce valuable studio work.

Kava Kava aren't as expensively recorded as The Grassy Knoll, but they have the luck that comes from living the music. They love Black Sabbath's bass lines and record them dirty and raw, but Pat Ferguson sings over them with the lyrical freedom of Jack Bruce with Cream (or Jeff Simmons in 1969). Urgent Hip-hop loops impregnate the music, and there's a great Ice T sample on "Lippa Gore" ("Boss humpin' in yer face, honey"). Incubated in Huddersfield, Kava Kava look set to follow The Chili Peppers and Body Count into the maelstrom of rave-rap-heavy-gongness. Good lyrics too, all meshed with puns and Hendrix-

**The Grassy Knoll**  
**The Grassy Knoll**

NET 059 CD

**Kava Kava**  
**Dither EP**

CHOCOLATE FIREGUARD CFG004 CD

The Grassy Knoll is San Francisco multi-instrumentalist Bob Greene's project: wordless rock that is open to

style trippiness

With Kava Kava the rhythmic drive plays with you to respond, it's not some neat ornament for chilling out to. They're reclaiming psychedelia from the Velvet-drones and making metal musicianship something more imaginative than Berklee School athletics. They deserve your ear

BEH WATSON

### Simon M Gray The Vanishing Point

KLANGBILDER 9001 CD

The thing about Ambient — and I'm going back a bit here, to the deep-throated Enid ur-Ambient of the sleepy-bee, slowed-down Hoover variety — was the extravagant lengths to which critics went to dissociate it from New Age, as though even semantic proximity to the latter was irreversibly poisonous. Some years on from that debate, this release from a relatively new electrohead on the scene further begs the question of the location of the frontier between the two

The vaguely spiritual, homophonic Radox of Ambient soundwash is here in bathtubs, and Gray's insistence on lacing it with Pwohphone pop accompaniment is to be regretted. Similarly, Gray's New Age sympathies are brutally exposed on the (admittedly rather good) piano solos "Another June" and "Close", plush pastiches of the long-shadowed modal meandering of Lyle Mays and queter Joachim Kuhn. But on the 23-minute "Audience, Light And Pictures" (with John Cage's sampled musings surfacing among other discreetly found sound) the music finally floats free. As it progresses, the metabolism of the music gradually slows down until it stops breathing altogether. The penultimate track, "Separate Ways", meanwhile, lashes out with loud and disruptive sunspot flares of orchestral tumult and suggests a muscular alter ego to this winsome player that might bode well for future releases.

While Aphex Twin fans really should look elsewhere, the album has some stylistic cogency and unity which interestingly blurs the distinction between terminally un-

PC New Age and silver-suited bliss-out still more. Next month, Kitzro goes Swingbeat.

PAUL STUMP

### Guided By Voices Vampire On Titus/Propeller

MATAADOR OLE 083 CD

### Shady World

BEGGARS BANQUET BQCD 166  
CD/MC/EP

### Thinking Fellers Union Local 282

Strangers From The Universe

MATAADOR OLE 109 CD

For the groups crawling out of America's Lo-fi compost heap, the leap from obscurity to (a kind of) prominence isn't such a great one. Dayton, Ohio's Guided By Voices, who landed in San territory with their recent and excellent *Bee Thousand* album, may have been plugging away at the margins for ten years, but on the evidence and strength of this resurges (two albums on one CD), it was probably only a matter of time before they emerged overground anyway.

*Vampire On Titus* (1993) and *Propeller* (1992) showcase virtually everything that went to make *Bee Thousand* such a hit. Short attention spans (with 33 songs between them, the average song length is a refreshing two minutes), faultless songwriting (every other track would give lesser indie groups enough ideas for a whole album), stylistic promiscuity and a sub-aqua production job.

Like most of their peers, Guided By Voices specialise in lyrical drivel (for some of the worst offenders, see *Trumans Water*, and *Shady here*), but titles like "Jar Of Cardinals", coupled with the sheer range of 60s icons parodied/paraphrased, suggest a more deliberately psychedelic. Syd Barrett-style line in nonsense verse. The meaninglessness, though, is a smokescreen. Whatever GBV's real intent is — cut-up? Collage? Pastiche? Tribute? — the end result is something like the entire Creation Records back catalogue, compressed into an hour and

effortlessly exceeded, a sort of Intelligent Retro.

Shady is the work of ex-Mercury Rev fifth-wheel David Baker, his break for freedom after the New York State group had settled down to become a "proper" band and didn't need his looming anymore (It's possibly evidence of Lo-fi and American Alternative Rock's encroaching senility that spin-off albums are now being generated — Pavement's old drummer Gary Young has also just released his debut solo record — with supergroups no doubt not far behind.)

World is at its weakest when Baker collaborates with members of The Boo Radleys ("Hey Yeah!", "Soul Of Things To Come"), degenerating into an indefinable, part-psychedelic, part-warbled mess. Far better is "Narcotic Candy", where Sooyoung Park of Beach Magnet helps out to create a musical gale of Mercury Rev proportions, and the sprinkling of totally self-written tracks, where Baker simultaneously indulges and casts aside the loon persona he adopted for Mercury Rev. Overall, it's patchy, and as a chance to weigh up whether Baker has the talent to go it alone, inconclusive. *Strangers In The Universe* illustrates all that is wrong and right with the Lo-fi groups. With their song titles lurching into nonsense ("My Pal The Tortoise", "Bomber Pilot WWII"), and lyrics banal enough to drag them back to the brink of sobriety, Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 are a quintessential mid-90s rock group, brave enough to face up to rock's social irrelevance and to face down any accusations of the genre's exhaustion.

The album opens like a less harmonically rich Polvo. With their guitars seemingly restricting to play all the scales just next door to the conventional, *TFUL282* were widely between the almost mainstream and the grittily avant garde, as if the band were uncertain whether they were bidding to replace Sonic Youth or Slint as overground or underground heroes. "Uranium", "Guilotine", "Pull My Pants Up Tight" and "The Operation", the core of the album, raw and well like the latter band, utilising the

reharmonised discordant musical language Slint evolved for *Spiderland* as well as it ever has been. At a time when the dominant mode in rock is a mutant bogie (Jon Spencer, Shellac, Big Chief), *Strangers In The Universe* is a small consolation for those who might wish rock to go forward.

JAKUBOWSKI

### Barry Guy & The London Jazz Composers' Orchestra Portraits

INTAKT 035 CD

### Barry Guy & The NOW Orchestra

Study/Witch Gong Game II/10

MAYA 9402 CD

At nearly two hours, *Portraits* is by far the longest piece Barry Guy has yet composed for his mates in The LJC/O, and the plural is important. Rather than attempting to fit their variegated skills and instrumental attitudes into a piece of music with a single point of view, he has approached the problem from the other way around, devising combinations and settings for the musicians in which they may feel unrestricted, even as they're part of a larger whole.

The scheme provides seven major orchestral sections which incorporate small group "subset interpolations" as well as thoroughly improvised "portrait subsections" which link the movements together, taking on the characteristics of a suite. The music does not suffer from such internal divisions, however — full of tension and suspense, progress is never suspended, only redirected through a promenade of either familiar or radical tone colours and dramatic gestures. It seems as if more of the music is improvised than ever before, and yet Guy's touch is everywhere, especially seductive in the composed details behind soloists. The major themes include a "cool" episode for tuba, flute and casually sauntering bass, a satanic blues, passages of textural configurations, and even some conventional swing. Given breath by such phenomenal musicians as Evan

Parker, Radu Malfatto, Howard Riley, Paul Lytton and the like, *Portraits* is a marvellous achievement.

Working with a completely different ensemble (Vancouver's New Orchestra Workshop Orchestra), we're able to hear how successful Guy's methods sound, separated from the all-encompassing virtuosity of The LJC. The short *Study* is an ensemble articulation of characismo, with Guy's bass solo finding resonance in the music's cracks and crags. *Witch Gong Game II*, taking title, inspiration and some graphic motifs from paintings by the Scottish artist Alan Davie, requires the conductor (Guy) to cue the band through individual and group alarms and excursions. The soloists, many of Canada's best, rise to the challenge, and if I highlight the contributions of pianist Paul Pimley, guitarist Ron Samworth, drummer Dylan Van Der Schyft, saxophonist Saul Berson and vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan, it's only because they put a personal slant on their material seldom encountered in previous Guy scores.

Both discs cite further evidence of Barry Guy's mastery as choreographer of composition and improvisation.

ART LANGE

## Human Feel Welcome To Malpesta

NEW WORLD RECORDS 80450 CD

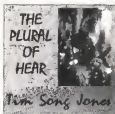
## Ed Jackson Wake Up Call

NEW WORLD RECORDS 80451 CD

## Joshua Redman Mood Swing

WARNER BROS 9362 45643 CD

Each of these impressive releases addresses, at least implicitly, the renewal of the jazz language — Human Feel most radically. They're sceptical about jazz criticism, "every well-weighted word of which encounters zero gravity in the Human Feel atmosphere." There's some truth in that, and the originality of this music recalls



**Black Saint**, New World: through Harmonia Mundi

**Rising High**: through RTM/Pinnacle

**Succulent Sounds**: 10444 Royal Oaks Drive, Morrovia, CA 91016-3776, USA

**Wayside**: 357 South Curson #12K, Los Angeles, CA 90036, USA

**Complacency**: through These, ReR Recommended

**Funky Mushroom**: through ReR, Southern

**4AD**: through RTM/Pinnacle

Schoenberg's "air from another planet".

Human Feel are a young band, comprising Jim Black (drums), Andrew D'Angelo (alto sax, bass clarinet) and Chris Speed (tenor and clarinet) from Seattle, and Kurt Rosenwinkel (guitar) from Philadelphia. Their sound is open and refreshing, and there's a purity about the improvising, angular lines merging seamlessly with composed sections. Mostly with a strong pulse, tightly structured round fragments of melody, the numbers (all by the band except the traditional "Yesterday I Passed") still continue to sound thoroughly original. The line up — no bass — contributes, and the sound at least suggests Joey Baron's bass-less trio from *RA/decadesuredot* (also on New World). But with these well-weighted words floating away, you'll have to try this strongly-recommended album yourself.

Also from New World Records is *Wake Up Call* from Ed Jackson, altoist with The 29th Street Saxophone Quartet. The sense of originality here comes from fine compositions more than Jackson's own soloing — bubbling alto inspired by Cannonball Adderley. "My philosophy of writing is, you start with an idea and then develop it, see where it takes you," he writes in the sleeve notes. That's clear from the unusual and clever arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Played Twice", with ensemble horns staggering the theme. The album is framed by tributes to bebop pianists — "One For Bud", dedicated to Bud Powell, introduces some quicksilver brightness into proceedings that are sometimes rather dark-textured and clotted. (The more open Human Feel avoided that problem.)

Whether it's extra rehearsal time funded by the Reader's Digest Fund — in a bizarre marriage of hip and unhip — or having uptown composer Milton Babbitt on the board, New World have a consistent record.

Their albums will never sell like Joshua Redman's neo-bop *Mood Swing* of course. This is the young tenor saxophonist's third album,

and finest to date, after his whirlwind entry with *Joshua Redman and Wish*. But what has this superb release — which runs the gamut of contemporary styles, from swing to samba to rock to free — got to do with renewing the jazz language? Well, maybe appearances are deceptive. Like the greatest jazz improvisors, Redman's lines yield the illusion of escape from the repeating chord sequence. His brilliantly paced performance reveals complete mastery of the whole range of the instrument. Pianist Brad Mehldau's contribution is essential. On the bluesy, hypnotic "Chill" they work together in what is a triumph of content over form. Christian McBride (bass) and Brian Blade (drums) complete the line up. *Mood Swing* shows that, in the hands of a master, there's mileage yet in a more earthbound status quo.

ANDY HAMILTON

## The Irresistible Force Global Challenge

RISING HIGH REN 24 CD/2LP

In the age of vapour, the body is an intractable outline, a barrier to be transgressed. The seven tracks on *Global Challenge* are constructed on the base that abstract audio-synthesis accesses a gateway (that other, more literal musics actively shut down) out of the body and into the mists of psychic free-fall. The music, courtesy of Momam Morris's Irresistible Force incarnation, is perfect in the way it conforms to both current, peevish notions of Ambient and the "altered states" programming requirements of such archetypal Ambient rooms as The Big Chill, Telepathic Fish, Oslofate, etc. The tracks (titles include "Moonrise", "Sunstroke", "Snowstorm") — ah, the wonders of Twilight-Nature! — are fuzzy snapshots in a journey from bliss into stupor. Pulseless electronics seep in and out of the listening spectrum by a process of slacker-osmosis. Sometimes, these pure tones morph, distort, waveform and orchestrate themselves into choral ecstasies, and occasionally these 'etherial' qualities are dissipated by the



introduction into the sound world of psychic anchors (er, beats, that is).

It's a collection of genre pieces, in other words, and like all genre albums the tracks differ from one another only in the most microscopic instances of nuance and timbre. Equally, they are virtually interchangeable with the tracks that appear on what feels like a snowstorm of recent releases, all of which can be identified with a very specific area of 90s socialising, the chill out room. For instance *A Day On Our Planet* by Oliver Lieb (aka Space Lab) released on the German Eye Q label, *Mama 6* by Journeyman and *Journey Of The Carcass* by Real Life, two releases on Ninja Tune's Ambient NTone subsidiary. Further's *5 Further Journeys* on the North South label is a collaboration between The Grid's Richard Norris and Rocket from that mini-empire of New Edge accessorizing, Ambient Sohio. Solar Quest's *Orship* on Freeze, the Ambient subsidiary of Belgium's Crammed Discs, *Sea Space Ocean* by Blue Environment (aka P. Melato, who styles himself as Italy's only Ambient musician), Pete Namlook's *Electro Claps* on Fax, which contains music written for a ballet directed by Christian Møller and danced by Stephen Galloway, yet another Fax release, Chris Meloeche's *Recurring Dreams Of The Urban Myth*, an intermittently successful attempt to fuse analogue environments with the sensuous atmospheres of *musique concrète*, all of the tracks on *Boredom* is Deep And Mysterious (cute), a compilation on the Danish Ambient label April, as well as *My Left Side Is Out Of Sync* by Double Muffled Dolphin (hmm, Ambient whimsy) from the same source. Did I miss any?

Back to Global Chloë. The problem with Mixmaster Morris slotting effortlessly into the Ambient canon is that we have been led to expect something more than just genre pieces from this particular source. In *The Wire* 77 (July 1990), Morris was interviewed by Mark Sinker. He spoke of creating new tracks by cutting up Ornette Coleman's *Prime Time*, and made links between his own

mathematical/metaphysical compositional processes ("taking a series of notes to be a vector and submitting it to matrix multiplication") and those of Anthony Braxton. Almost five years on, such radical (for a musician then best known for his DJing with The Shamen) propositions feel like distant echoes (at least as far as Global Chloë is concerned), and The Irresistible Force has become the Holy Fool of the Ambient World, an out-to-lunch jester masquerading as a wizened mystic, a lysergic equivalent to the bumbling Shane MacGowan. In certain circles (hello, *H-D*) Morris is still portrayed as a frontiersman of analogue psychtopia, but on this evidence he sounds more like a digital hillbilly, stumbling around in the backwoods of Techno-culture, while a variety of newer (not necessarily younger) musicians pursue the radical sampladelia he once postulated ever further into the forbidden zone.

Irresistible Force? More like Inconsequential Fart.

TONY HERRINGTON

## Tim Song Jones The Plural Of Heir

SUCCESSION SOUNDS TDC 01 CD

## In Be Tween Noise "so delicate and strangely made"

WAYSIDE MUSIC NPB 1 CD

## Organum Submission

COMPLACENCY CPD 9401 CD

You know those bristling, squeaky synthesizer sounds that make you squirm, the sounds that make you think "I'm not buying that synth"? The horrible, late 80s digital presets that are the reason why fat, warm analogue synths are now back in fashion? Well, someone has taken pity on those sounds and made a whole album of them.

Tim Song Jones is a recording engineer in Hollywood. He worked on post-production for *Cry Scream* (if, personally, I would have kept quiet about that). This is a solo album, one man and his Korg Wavestation doing battle against

the forces of common sense. I'm sorry to be nasty, but I could hardly concentrate on the music. Here's a wailing synth guitar solo over a ghasly digital drum unit, here's some cheapo synth marmite, track eight has the worst drum programming I've ever heard, and track ten... well, it's called "Digital Chloë" and it's a solo on a Yamaha DX7 keyboard. I rest my case.

In Be Tween Noise is mainly Steve Roden, a Los Angeles-based composer/visual artist. On his album sleeve he has a nice quote from the French painter Jean Dubuffet about the advantage "that is afforded by the improvised use of an instrument whose proper handling is not known, with the unexpected discoveries that this can bring about." Roden quietly explores the violin, for example, like a child who has never seen one played. He approaches the accordion, the harmonium, a Thai mouth organ and a sampler in the same spirit.

There are nine of Roden's slow-moving and beautiful pieces here — he sets up a tension between the disciplined rules of his compositions and the slightly out of control nature of these instruments he can't play properly. The results are adventurous and strangely passionate, though always understated. Roden's fondness for odd instruments and musical accidents recalls Simon Jeffes and his Penguin Cafe Orchestra. In fact there is an uncanny similarity between part of Roden's "Phonography" and Jeffes's recent *Cage Dead*.

"Organum", "Submission", "Remunerate" — love those ascetic religious titles! Organum is David Jackson, another composer/visual artist, but this time English, formerly of The Scratch Orchestra. Track one is called "Cow" — yes, monks wear it, but it could be a big metal cover too. And what we hear is an exquisite grinding noise made by a small group armed with pieces of metal, violin bows, some grinders maybe. Track two is more exquisite grinding, getting bigger and darker now. And track three ("Submission") is grinding in the park, to a backdrop of traffic and birdsong. There are swiping noises

from a stick, someone kicks over some cups and buckets, 50 yards away a motorbike is revving up. It's a dreamy industrial vision, and the title track is a classic.

Jackson has a fascination with organising sounds of metalworking. When he introduces bamboo flutes the music recalls a gamelan, perhaps an industrial one like Paul Bunwell's Bow Gamelan, or even more, Bunwell's "Rain In The Face" duo with David Toop. I also get the feeling of some ghostly hymn to a departed industrial age, like coming across a deserted mill in a wooded Yorkshire valley.

CLIVE BELL

## Oliver Lake Quartet Edge-ing

BLACK SAINT 120104 CD

One quarter of the noisy, free-wheeling World Saxophone Quartet, also specialist Oliver Lake is an intense, anti-romantic and unsentimental heir to the Dolphy tradition, capable of expressing himself with uncluttered honesty in widely diverse settings, from free jazz to pop, while retaining a post-Albert Ayler physicality and understanding of the aesthetics of the broken line. This latest release on the Soul Note label finds him leading his current touring trio, with bassist Reggie Workman and drummer Andrew Cyrille, augmented by pianist Charles Eubanks, whose previous studio work with both Dewey Redman and Archie Shepp are undoubtedly the right credentials for this kind of job.

Five of the six tracks follow a traditional theme-solos-theme blowing structure, and there is even a blues and something close to a Latin tune, but enthusiasts of Oliver Lake's freer outings should not find the music predictable. The leader's heavy, vibrato-less thematic statements are as interesting in their tense bluntness as the improvisations that follow, and even echo Thelonious Monk through Steve Lacy with an interest in the angular and unexpected. The Eric Dolphy influence in Lake surfaces later, when he loses his posse and fills every cubic inch of the horn,

blowing a torrent of notes punctuated by sudden drops to the bottom of the instrument and passionate, vocal harmonics.

The quartet plays with the necessary rapport to push the music into those areas that are the rightful territory to musicians of the talent and experience of Lake, Workman and Cyrille. Workman's lines, in particular, are a compelling commentary — melodic and supportive on the leader's attractive ballad "Scene One", and swinging with relaxed creativity on the title track. A decade and a half with Cecil Taylor has not only left Andrew Cyrille with an inquiring musicality and valuable flexibility, but also the ability to sound strangely relaxed in even the most intense musical corner. *Edge-ing* is a good reminder of just how subtle a craftsman he is, away from the uphill dash of Taylor's superhuman groups. It would be nice to hear this band live, but in the current climate, we'll probably have to make it do with this very fine CD.

LINTON CHISWICK

## Susanne Lewis Kissyrur

FUNKY MUSHROOM FM 024 CD

## Hail/Smell How To Live With A Tiger

FUNKY MUSHROOM FM 025 CD

## Lisa Germano Geek The Girl

4AD CAD 4017 CD

Susanne Lewis should break the well kept secret of her highly original songwriting with *Kissyrur*. Her first solo album continues the themes explored by her band (US combo Hail) in a more intimate but no less angular setting. Lewis's songs are often convoluted but never at the expense of melody and a fine pop sensibility. She plays most of the instruments and a questioning way with arrangements throws up some interesting combinations. "Strange Field" wanders through grumbling bass guitar and wayward slide, taking in a frantic double-speed middle section. "He's A Rock" squeezes in

fragmented, almost Beethoven-like interludes between a lovely whistlable chorus carrying Lewis's distinctive voice — clean and sweet but spiked with a strange edge.

She's found a niche that she's claiming as her own, though she shares it on *How To Live With A Tiger* with New York singer Azalia Snail (who plays zither on *Kissyrur*), though without any other Hail members. The textures are thicker here. The two voices are mixed down into a shadowy, shifting pool of sound, with buple bass, flute and piccolo cutting through. And again there are some fine melodic moments such as the brazenly catchy "Shazam".

Multi-instrumentalist Lisa Germano set out her stall with *Happiness*, her debut album from earlier this year. It too toyed with song structure in a capacious way, which carried a whiff of condescension, but was ultimately hard to resist. *Geek The Girl* is a set of songs about a woman who finds out she isn't cool, and gets used, but "dreams of still loving a man in hopes that he can save her from her shy life — ha ha, what a geek". It's ambivalent and distanced by the concept, but this album is far sparser and darker than its predecessor. It's so ironic that it's difficult to tell what is tongue-in-cheek and what is born of life, but the bitterness is obvious. "Of Love And Colors" is a drawn-out recognition of all the "fuck-ups" in the world, while "Cancer Of Everything" is daubed black as pitch. "Cry World" is outstanding, with a beautiful melody and a Kate Bush-like touch in achieving an otherworldly passion and sadness.

DAVE MORRISON

## Lilith Orgazmo

SUB ROSA SR76 CD

## In The Nursery Anatomy Of A Poet

THEIR MOJO MM 18976 CD

Whenever Alesister Crowley's name is linked to a musical project, it's usually accompanied by a Pavlovian groan from the listener at the prospect of another raff notoriety-by-association outpouring —

Swedish band While Stains (who borrow their name from his most notorious novel) are one such combo destined for the dumper. Crowley was a mage, but his colossal appetite for drugs, alcohol and sex puts him closer lifestyle-wise to Led Zeppelin, especially the traveling Sodom and Gomorrah of their 70s tours. Jimmy Page bought his former residence Boleyns Lodge and his 'dictum' "Don't What Though What" was scratched on the run out groove of *Led Zep III* in homage. How apt.

Lilith takes things a lot more seriously. On *Orgazmo* they employ "Crowlean text and numerological theory to generate and arrange sounds which are then synthesized into a whole" with both fists. "Some of the Great Beasts' recitations are in there, but looped and computer-deconstructed beyond comprehension into an unsettling set of atmospheres. Not only does Crowley's name come with so much unavoidable baggage, his magick doesn't readily transfer onto disc and all this would be lost without the lengthy sleeve notes. There are some amazing sounds though, and some genuinely alien ones — the treated pulsar radio signals of "He", for instance, which sound like a desert being hoovered with an aircraft engine.

Occult expert Colin Wilson has a sneaking regard for Crowley, though not for his poetry. *Anatomy Of A Poet* features Wilson reciting (very well, it must be said) some of his favourite works from the likes of Dowson, Wilde and Yeats. In The Nursery's music forms a complementary backdrop, sensual and unabashedly romantic at times. It's a bit of a grab-bag of an album with Dolores Marguerite C. singing over lush grooves and a version of Scott Walker's highly melodramatic "The Seventh Seal" featuring Shock-Headed Peeters' Karl Blake. In The Nursery have improved radically since ditching their military drumming and bloated Wagnerian fanfares in favour of a far more seductive classical/Ambient approach. Last time out, they recorded a fine film soundtrack (*Ambush Of Ghosts*) and this follow-up has a subtle cinematic flow too.

DAVE MORRISON

## Magic Hour No Excess Is Absurd

CHIEF OF 20 CD LP

## Heather Nova Oyster

BUTTERFLYING LIFE BFLCD 12 COMIC

The 'excess' in the title of Magic Hour's long player could well refer to the guitars which dominate throughout. Often the sound is like Hendrix jamming with The Velvet Underground, with lots of fuzzy, distorted lead guitar paroxysms. Everything else is to the rear of the mix, with vocals intoning the lyrics in a hushed reverence. The neo-psychedelic "Isn't A Way" pretty much sets the tone, clocking in at over eight minutes of what's mainly an extended fretboard workout.

Hardly groundbreaking stuff, but performed with some aplomb by a four piece band containing two ex-members of Galaxie 500. "Sally Free And Easy" sounds the most like a Galaxie 500 song, with guitar self-indulgence at bay and the song's length worked to a mesmeric advantage. Some of the album sounds parched and directionless, and the ghost of the much-maligned "shoegazing" bands from a few years back is not quite laid to rest.

With a tighter lean on the songwriting, "World Of One", "The Last Mistake" and "Heads Down" hold the attention and manage to avoid bland space-rock stylings, and Magic Hour suddenly seem a band with possibilities. They just need to keep the guitarist in check some of the time.

Among the current crop of new female rock performers, Heather Nova sits somewhere between Liz Phair and Toni Amos. Oyster's unclassifiability might owe more to uncertainty than artistic intention, veering as it does from rocker, confessional material ("Walk This World", "Blue Black") to acoustic ballads ("Heal", "Walking Higher"), without quite establishing a firm identity of its own. There is some good stuff going on here — "Island" sounds hauntingly obsessive and "Verona" is a successful folk rock take on Patti Smith — but it's all a bit too tasteful in execution.

Some of the tracks sound like they exist solely to showcase the

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more excessive vocal stylings of an otherwise impressive voice and there is the occasional drift onto sterile AOR ground. Oyster possesses a creditable number of memorable hooks but it really could do with a little more grit around the edges to offset its melodic centre.

**TOM RIDGE**

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### **Peter Maxwell Davies The Lighthouse**

COLLINS CLASSICS 14152 CD

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### **Peter Maxwell Davies Symphony No 3**

COLLINS CLASSICS 14162 CD

If Peter Maxwell Davies's ongoing fascination with the sea is entirely evident in *The Lighthouse*, his programme note to the *Symphony No 3* makes it clear that it is an equally powerful inspiration in that more abstract work as well.

Maxwell is 60 this year, and Collins have been pumping out recordings with great regularity to mark the occasion. He is a composer who has succeeded in creating a readily identifiable soundworld within his music, located in a series of abiding concerns with both form and content which surface again and again in his work.

*The Lighthouse* is a chamber opera dating from 1979, based on the mysterious disappearance of three lighthouse keepers from the Flannan Isles in 1900, with Neil Mackie, Christopher Keyte and Ian Comby taking the roles of the three inspectors sent to investigate.

It has a strong claim to be his most successful work for the theatre, and is certainly the most often performed. Recorded live in Manchester, its brooding, atmospheric evocations of mood and well-defined narrative movement translates well to the purely aural medium, although, like all opera, it is most impressive when heard in the context for which it was intended.

*The Symphony No 3* was first performed in 1985, and is indicative of his growing interest in the architectural implications of formal symphonic structure, and the marrying of his own

idiosyncratic musical language with received forms equally applicable in his ongoing but now almost complete *Spatzky* Concertos series, eight of which are now on disc. The opening movement's savage evocation of the sea around his Orkney home is one of his most powerful achievements, while the textural and structural complexities of the work unravel with admirable clarity throughout.

The composer conducts The BBC Philharmonic in both of these major works in his canon, and either would provide a full-blooded but highly approachable first step into his now large catalogue (more so, certainly, than some of the more extreme of his music theatre pieces, although those are central to his development). If you don't already know his work, you might be better served by taking an initial dip into a collection of his shorter works, a fair number of which are now also on record. If you get hooked, though, you will definitely want to get round to these.

**KERRY MATHESON**

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### **Network**

**Network: Volume One**

OSISC 3CD CD

If eclecticism is the infernal blight on modern music [Turn to page 48 for more on this story — Ed], then *Network*, Martin Archer's collection of 55 music miniatures, composed and performed by friends, conspirators and correspondents from all around the world, is at least a friendly virus. Archer has assembled a "fast moving snapshot of what people are capable of producing in the middle of living, listening, sleeping, working, playing," and the result is a CD that bounces around several different worlds, never settling, yet unexpectedly humane and charming. These aren't really postcards from the edge.

There are solo saxophone improvisations, a lot of electronic pieces, dopey chunks of New Age, piano nocturnes, a brief string quartet, an even briefer opera and about 30 other extracts or complete works. Most of the performers are scarcely-known

names, though there is the odd star (if you call Alfred 23 Harth a star) and a number of Archer's long term collaborators from the Sheffield based music underground (Jasnock, Carver, Beck, etc.). What's useful and impressive is the scrupulous attention given to juxtaposition and form. Archer's running order works impeccably, as random as it often seems, and his insistence on pieces that rarely break the two minute barrier induces polish and discipline from players who might otherwise ramble or implode.

Generally, the pieces contributed by the improv hardcore have a bite and vision which feeble electronic stuff such as Stephen Haywood's "Bubblegum" or Beto Trinidad's "Lele" miss altogether. Check out Mick Beck's two beautiful little solos, Simon Fell's astonishing "Crammed With Distressing Brain" or Archer's own Primates too locking into "Serra-club". But there are some suitably hallucinatory electronics too. Either way, you're sure to find, oh, at least 22 utterly absorbing tracks here, as well as the merely good ones. How many records can you say that about?

**RICHARD COOK**

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### **New Order**

**The Best Of New Order**

LONDON 828 580 COMCLP

By 1984, New Order were three years old and had tapped the mainstream market. "Blue Monday", the best selling 12" single ever, was back in the charts for the third time and the group were beginning to exorcise the ghosts of Joy Division and Ian Curtis. *The Best Of New Order* contains 16 singles from the ensuing decade.

A dissection isn't easy to perform. The track sequencing twists and turns its way through time, placing "True Faith" (1987, removed for 1994) before "Thieves Like Us" (1984), and "Regret" (1992) before "The Perfect Kiss" (1985). Then there's the disentangling of personal memories and associations, pretty much par for the course (for any one of a certain age, that is) with a band who were

always there to be lived by rather than thought about. But after all the spring-cleaning what emerges is a guide to evolutionary survival.

As the 70s became the 80s, the fallout from punk was starting to feel somewhat dusty. Having released "Ceremony" as their first single in 1981, New Order cut their ties with Joy Division bleakness and started to investigate new electronic possibilities. Drum machines and human beatboxes were revealing how soundbites could be cut up and broken down, the parameters of the keyboard had been extended for a whole new generation of novelty bleeps, and everywhere punk's old lo-fi aesthetic was being shelved for a pristine CD sound. It was a surreal time when technology was being haunted for its eccentricities and producers were being lauded as much as the bands they moved. Everywhere punk's legacy seemed under attack, New Order were a compromise.

If The Pogues could sell us Irish folk by battering their foreheads with tambourines, New Order's Electro-pop was acceptable precisely because of their lo-fi persona. They loved football and booze and seemed uncomfortable in the limelight. A day at Factory Records seemed little different to doing a day's work in a real factory, the band recorded their music and then they went out to play. New Order were bluffers whose nonchalant nonsense-couplets and dodgy programming passed for ironic effect. The cowbells on "Blame Love Triangle" paid tribute to Go-Go and the sheep play-out to "Fine Time" helped introduce many to sampling, but this was all tolerable because the band never forgot their gutters. Peter Hook's choral bass lines pumped their way through every track while occasional moments of balladry ("Thieves Like Us") harked back to Joy Division days.

As the 80s became the 90s, the music started to slide, but if the Republic album came as a deep disappointment after the triumphal bounciness of "World In Motion" there are ghosts of their heyday everywhere. Tracks like "Shelthook" and "Blue Monday"

can be heard now as early antecedents of today's popular Electro — Orbital, Underworld, Detroit Techno. For this reason alone — whether or not they record together again — their spirit should endure.

**SUSAN PASTERIS**

**Nirvana**  
**Unplugged in New York**  
GEPFEN GED 24722 COMICLP

The "unplugged" concept, with its contrived informality, gives off a strong whiff of music establishment hubris: it seems to reinforce old ideals of "authenticity" and "musicianship," that if you can't cut it in this rarefied arena you haven't made it into the first division. It's also been used as a successful career reviver, relying on judicious back-catalogue rading (stand up, Rod Stewart).

Here we find Nirvana nesting in the soft white underbelly of the beast and all such cynical reservations should be put aside: this is an exciting, vital performance with a weird kind of beauty. It's not that Nirvana exercise undue restraint — "Where Did You Sleep Last Night" is leadily springing fire — but the predominantly acoustic format highlights the melody and tension of their songs and puts the sound of Kurt Cobain's ravaged tonsils up front.

"Come As You Are", "Something In The Way" and "All Apologies" eclipse their original album versions, sounding more eerily intimate. "Dennyroyal Tea" is Cobain alone with his guitar and cracked, yearning voice, and "About A Girl" is a minor classic taken from their debut album *Bleach*. Bowie's "The Man Who Sold The World" and The Vaselines' "Jesus Don't Want Me For A Sunbeam" are covered with the same degree of success, and there's a guest spot for The Meat Puppets' Kirkwood brothers, assisting with three of their warped desert songs.

Inevitably, in the light of Cobain's suicide, *Unplugged in New York* is going to be viewed with a kind of morbid significance, and there'll be a search for grim portents in this performance — eg. "Don't expect



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me to cry/Don't expect me to lie/Don't expect me to die" ("Jesus Don't Want Me For A Sunbeam") But the band sound relaxed and on form throughout. Cobain appears to be enjoying himself, and the whole thing is very much alive. *Unplugged in New York* is the sound of an alternative rock band with a maverick pop sensibility at the peak of its powers. If the album is unworidly an epitaph at least it's a good one, and shows up the inadequacy of "Grunge" as a catch-all description of Nirvana's music.

**TOM RIDGE**

**Eddie Palmieri**  
**Palmos**

ELEKTRA NONESUCH 7559 61649 CD

No one in Latin music rivals the pianist Eddie Palmieri for eccentricity. He arrives three hours late for a gig and is instantly forgiven; he describes his solos in mathematical terms and talks metaphysics in interviews about music; he loves to bang the piano keys like a drum, and every one of his 25 albums is a dance record. With *Palmos* he has turned a fresh corner, and leaned heavily towards jazz. For these seven pieces, all instrumentals (a first for him), he called up an octet with a deliberate bias towards Latin jazz. In the autobiographical sleeve notes, he suggests, "Everything is leading to *Palmos*."

Palmieri chose musicians equally from New York's versatile young Latin pool (Johnny Torres on bass, Riche Flores on congas, longtime associate Anthony Canillo on bongos, and Jose Clausell on timbales) and from the city's jazz scene (Brian Lynch on trumpet and saxophonist Donald Harrison from the final Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, and trombonist Conrad Herwig from Miles Davis's late entourage). Blakey's arrangements are evoked throughout in the syncopated relation of horns to percussion, and there are occasional glimpses of Miles in ebging trumpet phrases.

The most outstanding quality of Palmieri's playing is his absolutely metronomic sense of rhythm, surely a tremendous reassurance for any horn soloist soaring over

the ensemble in tracks like "Palmas", the most straight-ahead "jazz" number where Palmieri sticks to a supporting role. The wonderfully sinuous "Slow Vaso" is anchored in Eddie's signature tune of small phrases repeated mantra-like behind his soloists, until he emerges from the corner for an awesome piano-percussion encounter. This track particularly illustrates the way Latin music challenges instruments' functions: the percussion sounds fabulously melodic; the piano plays rhythm. The album progresses like a concert, unwinding towards to "Bolero Dos", the Palmieri showcase, launched with a long, exploratory, thinking-aloud solo improvisation, full of space, impressionistic blocks of colour, dark and sombre, flashing to bright sparkling lights on water, until he pulls the band in for a final rousing finale.

This is a tremendous album, featuring seven long tracks ("Bolero Dos" comes in at just under ten minutes). I hope Eddie's never tempted back to the tired formulae of the salsa circuit songbook. He's right — everything has been leading to this.

**SUE STEWARD**

**Paris**  
**Guerrilla Funk**  
PRIORITY PTY 108 COMICLP

**Da Lench Mob**  
**Planet Of The Apes**  
PRIORITY PTY 110 COMICLP

1992's LA riots, and the iconography they spawned, provided the fuel West Coast HipHop needed for a glorious creative, and commercial, burst of activity. The infamous "gorillas in the mist" comment made by one of the officers accused in the first Rodney King trial turned up everywhere, almost universally transmogrified and detoured into "guerrillas in the mist", from the title of Da Lench Mob's funous debut album, through mentions on Ice Cube's classic *The Predator*, to Consolidated's own "Guerrillas In The Mist", with its rap courtesy of Oakland, San Francisco rapper Paris. As instant clichés went, the

rewritten slogan had a formidable resonance. Now, two years later, both Paris and Da Lench Mob have released albums with titles still echoing the catchphrase if anything, the re-use is symbolic of both records' musical and lyrical weaknesses.

With Paris, 'still' is also an all-too-overused word, his agit-raps (the titles "One Time Fo Ya Mind", "Bring It To Ya", "Whatcha See" all cast him in the role of consciousness raser and educator) seemingly stuck on repeating and reasserting his ferocious yet intelligent stance. It's strikingly put, but almost completely undermined by the music. Electro-style bass lines modulate more like the horrendously rigid From 242 than West Coast street funk, and soul backing vocals swathe and shroud the raps so that any nuggets of inspiration get lost. Full (graphic design as well as political) marks for using a Black Panther as his logo, no marks whatsoever for constructing an album that contains one quarter of a panther's grace and power.

Da Lench Mob's opening track, "Scared Little Nigger", falls into exactly the same pit-trap (lunkless bass line, soul backing vocals), fortunately, the rest of *Planet Of The Apes* picks up somewhat. True to their roots as Ice Cube acolytes, and much like their mentor, Da Mob have politicised themselves more thoroughly this second time around, even if it lacks the vague outlines of a programmatic, controlled intelligence like Paris's. Yet, with the partial exception of "King Of The Jungle", a free jazz sax thicket undermined by cod-African chanting, the combination of ruffness (mini-dramas of police officers being blown away before tracks) and righteousness doesn't quite work.

The reasons are obvious. While both Paris and Da Lench Mob have stayed true to their constituency, faithfully maintaining the internally consistent, dramatised 'reality' from release to release, the old excitement came, in 1992, from a sense of transformation, of possible change (the rhetorical shift from gangsta to realism). Neither drama nor guality have changed much, it's therefore

unsurprising that the rappers have. And when set against the various shards of post-HipHop experimentation, from Mo Wax through hardcore to Jungle, Lench Mob and Paris seem terribly stolid and safe all of a sudden, conservatives instead of the radicals they'd like to be. Which only highlights the problem at the core of any kind of politicised survivalist music: eventually, you have to stand at ease.

JAKUBOWSKI

### Parliament-Funkadelic Live 1976-93

SEQUEL RECORDS NEPCO 273 5CD

All the signs of life turn into death on that paradoxical project, the 'live' album. Those cheers, those screams, those conversations thrown out across the stage always alienate rather than involve. Miles, Coltrane, Neil Young: they all 'solved' the fatal flaw, the inherent pointlessness of the 'live' album by erasing the crowd by recognising that antiphony can't survive. Photographing and approaching the stage as a special kind of studio. None of the three, probably more, double albums so far released has ever 'captured' the fabled live impact of the P-Funk ensemble and they never will. George Clinton knows this, after all he never played anything on stage or the studio. Rather he conceptualised Parliament, theorised Funkadelic into studio genius, orchestrated Worrell and Collins and the other professors of sound on stage. But labels persist in 'documenting' shows rather than rehearsing them, giving us every last detail of a fuzzy Haskins guitar solo as if that reveals or adds something new to their classic records.

This latest four CD set from Sequel Records ranges from 1972 to 1993, from a raggedy Funkadelic version of "All Your Goodies Are Gone" to The P-Funk All Stars in Tokyo, 1993. What does come through is how fiercely, scorchingly rock P-Funk were. The guitar solos on "Cosmic Slop", on "Think It Ain't Illegal Yet" roar out

of the gate with a wrenching, headwrecking intensity. Consequently, the elaborate, almost bewilderingly detailed density of voices and synthesizers, horns and basses is what disappears into sludge, trails into standard order call-and-response rather than multiphonic orchestration.

Surprisingly, the later tracks with The P-Funk All Stars, supposedly inferior to the great days of 77-79, are what come off best. The sound is more spacious, lighter, it swims and slides rather than wretchedly dragging its bulk. But then tracks from Beita Woods, Louie Kabbabe and Trayleed find their way on to the last disc and they add nothing except bewilderment. Who is Louie Kabbabe and why is he on this compilation, anyway? There's an assumption that quantity guarantees quality but that is never necessarily the case. This is a shockingly uninformative set, cheaply packaged, failing to name photos properly, opting for a naive chronology rather than contextualising these 'legendary shows' of the Funk Mob at their creative zenith: Clinton, Worrell, Collins, Parker et al deserve the playful attention lavished on an Eric or a Lee Perry box set. They deserve a fabulous unreleased, not this mausoleum masquerading as a memorial.

KODWO ESHUM

### pool With Clive Bell Spring

SAUN BOX 58MCS MC

On Spring, Manchester's improvising group pool meet improviser, critic and Japanese pop aficionado Clive Bell. Richard Scott (who's also a critic at a well known London music magazine) gets things under way with a cheeky soprano sax solo. On the free ballad "Vapours" his upper range beautifully complements Bell's peluclid shakuhachi. There's always plenty of welcome daylight between Matthew Armstrong's bass and David Ross's drums, and their understated inventiveness gives Scott's alto clannet the chance to mellow out on "Spisby". Bell puts the pi saw (Thai need

flute) through its paces at the end of side one — a curious, buzzing nasal sound. The title track is another reach for the skies encounter between Bell and Scott, "Footwork", "Ba gwa" and "Footwork" move with mysterious ease through desultory dance figures and abstract improv. It's an elusive soundworld, as fresh and unfettered as improv should be. The musical equivalent of a cold shower, it's guaranteed to get the circulation going.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

### Rimitti Sidi Mansour

ABSOLUTE MT B61 CD

This record qualifies for instant 'incredibly strange music' status. Cheikha Rimitti is a 70 year old Algerian woman, a pioneer of Rai in the days when the genre implied brothel music, scorned by French and Arabic authorities alike. Rimitti got her first break in 1936 and she is now revered as an illustrious predecessor to today's Chebs and Chabas. Her style, which stems directly from Bedouin shepherd singing, is rough and completely devoid of the more Eastern refinement which is present in most of today's Arab music. Now, where it all becomes incredibly strange is that the line up of Rimitti's band includes Robert Fripp, The Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea and ex-David Kennedy East Bay Ray. Even the most fiercely eclectic of listeners may feel that the relationship between 1930s Oran and 1990s Los Angeles is a bit too tenuous to justify such a collaboration. Younger Rai singers have after all a familiarity with and a liking for LA-style rock which Rimitti cannot really pretend to equal. It doesn't help that the Cheikha was recorded separately in Paris while the Anglo-American band was overbooked later, thus preventing her from giving a more expansive performance, as well as depriving the whole affair of the live feeling which is so obviously crucial in Rai.

The Rachid productions which gave the genre its modern birth on the Algerian tape market

followed this same method of recording instruments after the voice, and are equally frustrating in this respect. This could have perhaps been remedied if arranger Houari Taïbi and especially his all-star cast had had a little more time for understanding and adapting to Rimitti's minimalist rawness, rather than go for such a thoughtlessly luxurious dressing of her voice. As it is, Rimitti's bald tales of love get drowned in an ocean of muso Electronica. Such a clash of cultures could not but provide the odd inspired moment, such as the bizarre "Serrer A Droite Et Stationner" or the hypnotic, string-laden "Rouked El Achra", but they are only lame successes, promising sketches of possible splendours.

One also begins to wonder whether more acoustic though no less fiery genres, such as flamenco or Cuban son, would have not been more adapted to Rimitti's vigour. Somewhere there probably exists a statutory obligation for one-world fusion projects to include at least one all-American component.

SYLVESTRE BALAZARD

## Giancarlo Schiaffini Edula

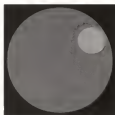
PENTAPHON SO58 CD

## Sebi Tramontana Il Giorno Del Santo

WIND 12 CD

In 1966 Jacob Druckman wrote *Animus I* for trombone and electronic tape, since then, exploration of the trombone's vast capacity for sound has grown apace (cf George Lewis). The trombone's capacity for vocalised wit serves to ameliorate the austerity of both single-instrument recitals and electronic abstraction. Here are two examples.

Schiaffini plays improvised trombone with taped sounds and/or digital delay. He is a canny composer, misty electronic effects and snuffling trombone work arrive out of considered constructions. In his sleeve note, Alfredo Proleta regrets the generic apartheid that prevents Schiaffini's music gaining recognition (Is it Ambient? Is it a



plane? etc.) Still, this disc works well — there's junk, churchy mournfulness, smudged moods. Schiaffini doesn't spotlight his ideas under your nose like the young-ity, it's all there, but he lets you come to it. 70 minutes of Carla Bley gone Ambient. Smokey, addled — and nice.

Sebi Tramontana was taught by Schiaffini. Here — wrapped in a pretty, scribbled package he designed himself — he presents 20 minutes of trombone and electronics recorded at the 1992 Controntracazioni Festival in Rome. Although there are some ripping moments — an electronic burst like a pistol-shot, low lunges on the trombone — it is a loose performance, lacking his teacher's fastidiousness. Shakyhachi samples, for example, are a distracting cliché. A teacher's methods need either consummate adoption or rebellious trashing, not a dilute echo. Still, Tramontana's a good player, and it'd be interesting to hear him with other improvisors.

BEN WATSON

## Florent Schmitt Salammbo

AOIS 203592 CD

One of the most interesting classical releases of the decade thus far. These suites, arranged from the soundtrack to a 1924 French silent film adaptation of Flaubert's novel, offer a fascinating document of maverick composition. Orientalist discourse and early film soundtracking.

Florent Schmitt (1870-1958) was a loose cannon in the French Impressionist heavy artillery, a contemporary and colleague of the likes of Ravel, Dukas, Roussel and the young Stravinsky. But whereas the others gradually refined and stripped down their exotic art to the streamlined circumstances of post-Grande Guerre culture, composing leaner and harsher music, Schmitt continued to hold the standards of epic infinities and artistic luxuriance high, particularly the Impressionist infatuation with all things Eastern.

That, of course, was based on a one-eyed vantage point of Oriental mores and culture not far from that

of the likes of Chu Chin Chow, what was not barbarous was opulent beyond compare, and that was it. Hardly the stuff for enlightened 90s listeners, but while one might wince at the presumption of Schmitt's inspiration, one can't dissociate it from the thought-processes which produced such awe-inspiring music. You'll hear few more virtuosically written and thoroughly intoxicating orchestral scores than *Salammbo* and few more virtuosically played than in this fruity performance by the relatively new Orchestre National d'Île de France under the boundlessly energetic direction of one of the world's most unsung unearthers of rare repertoire, Jacques Mercier. And it's also interesting to note that while Schmitt isn't acknowledged as in any way influential in film scoring, his colouristic extravagance echoes the Hollywood lushness of Korngold, Max Steiner et al by a good 20 years.

If one wanted to demonstrate to invading Martians just what a wonderful thing the symphony orchestra is, then this would be an ideal introduction. It's also a classic demonstration of good recording, with a high, wide and handsome sound. Carl Davis, hear it and weep.

PAUL STUMP

## Slowly Ming

CHILL OUT LABEL CHILL 003 CDLP

## Audio Sports Strange Fruits

ALL ACCESS AACD 004 CD

Two good examples of modern mid-paced, deconstructed, cross-pollinated dance music. Slowly is the moniker of two Anglo-Greek brothers, Darius and Caspar Kedros, sound engineers both, who have specialised in servicing a London based community of record companies (Dorado, Acid Jazz) and groups (Corduroy, Vibebe) that deal in a peculiarly British confection of modern R&B. The duo's long hours spent in subterranean, artificially lit, soundproof rooms has taught them introspection and led them to lend a heavy slice of Jamaica's dub

Pentaphon, Wind: through Impetus

Chill Out Label: through RTM/Pinnacle

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pyrotechnics to the jazzy grooves which bands such as Contour and D'Note have demanded from them.

As you might expect from studio heads, vocals rarely figure in their music, but immersion in sound construction has given them a crisp way with arranging and editing, knowing when to leave tones clear and allow silences to add to the menace of the band's airy gestalt. *Ming* just goes to show what a good grounding the techniques of dub offer. Here West Indian drum, bass and disorientating sound effects provide a platform for the brothers to slip in ripples of 70s funk without falling off into vapidity. The only non-sampled voice to be heard on this album comes from Ronny Fraser Munro, a performance poet whose sonorous contribution works in the same way as Allan Ginsberg's on 'The Clash's "Ghetto Defiant" (*Combat Rock*, 1982).

In the late 80s there existed a video game called Olympic Sports whose challenge for the player was to guide his athletic on-screen character triumphantly through a variety of track and field events by banging as hard and as quickly as possible on buttons and joysticks. This source of vicarious and lumpy pleasure was at sweat and no artistry, and serves as an easy allegory for a sizeable chunk of the recent and overrated Japanese club music that industriously swirls together jazz, HiPop and funk but without generating any emotion or innovation of its own (UFO are the obvious example). Not so Audio Sports, the latest venture of what must now be veterans of Japan's small and self-referential dance music scene.

Intiguously, the group once contained current Japanese hero Yamatsuka Eye, now it features DJ Takemura, the ubiquitous Mody Michiru (a sort of Nipponese Lisa Stansfield), and an English rapper named D-Zine (from the aforementioned D'Note, a group musically sympathetic to Audio Sports). However the main man is Aki Onoda who, the group's information sheet suggests, is making Audio Sports his own. He's doing this by detaching his group

from its fixation with entirely Occidental music techniques and adding some home grown conventions. As a consequence the best tracks on *Strange Fruit* ("Yellow Fever", "Melt With You") mirror the kitsch of the early 80s funk pop (Level 42, Depeche Mode) which shares those typically Oriental fixations with pose, space, and melodrama.

**JAKE BARNES**

## **Dave Soldier** **Smut**

AVANT AVIAN 019 CD

Dave Soldier is a guitar player, composer and professional psychiatrist and neurologist. As you might expect from John Zorn's Avant label, his *Smut* is a very strange album indeed. If you've ever wondered what happens when the medieval troubador tradition meets rock 'n' roll — and who hasn't at some time or other? — *Smut* gives you one sort of answer. Jimi Hendrix plays the music of Guillaume De Machaut, maybe. And the lyrics are mostly homoerotic songs from the Middle Ages.

There have been some precedents I guess: perhaps Gryphon, a medieval rock band of Tony Blair vintage. Of course *Smut* is a somewhat more sophisticated affair, with some very clever guitar and brass backings behind the singers. The female vocalist sings the Latin lyrics with a strong Italian accent, which can't be authentic. But that's better than the blokes, who sometimes sound like The Gumbies.

Joint producer Rory Young says his life's goal is to answer the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Maybe he's been reading too much of Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick, but then he got it from Spinoza, I think. But I confess that question is almost as baffling as *Smut*. Vastly entertaining all the same, it maybe doesn't do to worry too much about the artistic credentials.

**ANDY HAMILTON**

## **Spacetime Continuum** **Sea Biscuit**

FAX P561 CD

## **Pete Namlook/Jonah Sharp**

Wechselspannung

FAX PW17 CD

## **Pete Namlook/Klaus Schulze**

Dark Side Of The Moog

FAX PK96 CD

Three further instalments in Pete Namlook's ongoing "Quiet Revolution".

*Sea Biscuit* is the debut solo album from San Francisco-based Jonah Sharp. Ambient's very own Englishman abroad. It's a classic example of how this genre of music is both reflective and representative of its environment. Just as the new wave of Japanese Electronica reflects a *Blade Runner*-style futurism, so this album is suffused with the balmy atmosphere of America's West Coast.

Sharp's music stands outside the (self-conscious) confines of traditional Ambience by virtue of its rhythmic restlessness. Drawing on his formative musical experiences as a jazz drummer, he's produced seven tracks of delicate glosa, lazy sine wave transmissions and wistful synths, which are never content to wallow in their own stasis. This is motive music, deliberately programmed to travel from A to B, even if the journey itself is a relaxed one.

Sharp's previous Alien Community projects with Pete Namlook were works of fragmentation, like eavesdropping on deep space communications. *Wechselspannung* commences in similar style, dominated by power surges, swoops of sound, rising and falling. Gradually, however, a syncopated rhythm begins to assert a structure onto these abstractions, which progressively assumes melodic prominence. In a historical context, this places it closer to the work of serial composers. Many today cite such artists as an inspiration, but few, if any, have grasped the fundamentals of the form. For two thirds of this album, Sharp and Namlook attempt to

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place the methodology of serial composition into a Techno context, inverting the idea of melody above rhythm and blurring the distinctions between the two. For whatever reason, the last third lapses back into Technonormality, as the ubiquitous drum machine kicks in. But up to that point, *Wechselspannung* is simply like no Fax record that precedes it.

Most disappointing of the three is *Dark Side Of The Moog*, a collaboration between Namlook and ex-Tangerine Dream member Ambient pioneer, Klaus Schulze. Perhaps my expectations were too high. Schulze's work with Edgar Froese and particularly his solo LP, *Time Wind*, were some of the first records to foster my interest in electronic music. Namlook himself is responsible for at least two modern Ambient classics, *Air and Silence*. The potential for synergy should be enormous.

Unfortunately, there's very little confluence or interplay between the two. It's almost as if Namlook is too in awe of Schulze to impose any of his structural or artistic ideas. At times, he seems content to drop out of the picture altogether, leaving Schulze to produce a 90s take on 70s space rock. At others, when he does take centre stage, he produces those Namlook oscillations which, while evocative, could form part of any number of his solo albums. A textbook example of an opportunity missed.

**PETER MCINTYRE**

## Karlheinz Stockhausen Synthi-Fou

STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG 42 A/B 2 CD

This latest release in the patriarch of high modernism's own 'signature' series is a 16 minute synthesizer solo played by his son Simon on Yamaha, Casio, Oberheim, etc production keyboards. There is an unaccompanied version, "for study purpose, not for performance", a version for keyboards with electronic tape, and a version extracted from the opera cycle *Licht* for keyboards, tape and choir. A second CD, presented by Simon, painstakingly catalogues the source



**Stockhausen Verlag: Kettenberg  
15, 5067 Kürten, Germany**

**Topic: through Topic  
Slam: through Impetus**

**Quadrivium: Via Fratti 14, 06123  
Perugia, Italy**

**Leo: through Cadillac, These,  
Impetus**

of each sound used in the composition. This is a masterpiece of documentation: three versions of the piece, a 71 minute audio supplement, plus a 124 page book in which the composer tells us the great significance of the piece and details every aspect of the recording and mixing process for posterity. If that's not enough, you can also buy the score separately.

But is it all worth it? What does this controversial super-composer, the master of timbre who helped pioneer electronic music in the 1950s, make of the type of digital keyboard and sampling technology more associated with Techno and pop bands? Well, if you imagine Jean Michel-Jarre rehearsing a band doing Pierre Boulez tunes, you'd be uncomfortably close. Difficult to believe this unexceptional and uninspired digital music was composed by the creator of such revolutionary soundworlds as *Klooverstock I-XIV*, *Aus Den Sieben Tagen* and *Telemusik*.

Stockhausen's claim that *Synthi-Fou* "marks the beginning of a new era in composed music for keyboard instruments" is bizarre, even from a man of his legendary self-importance. It's more like the arse-end of 20th century piano music — a belated encore nobody asked for, when the audience are already halfway out of the concert hall. It is hard to imagine why its creator is so convinced that "future music-criminologists" researchers will want to sample the thing to smithereens. On the contrary, it is sonically uninteresting, especially compared with Stockhausen's own back-catalogue. By basing the composition around the keyboard itself, rather than the sounds, Stockhausen's murky bombastic quasi-orchestral textures and keyboard noises seem a complete misinterpretation of the potential of contemporary digital technology and programming.

I've loved, hated and struggled with Stockhausen's music over the years but this is a sad artefact whose claim to hold the key to the future is embarrassing. Play it back to back with a 15 year old record by Kraftwerk and you wouldn't even have a contest.

**RICHARD SCOTT**

## Various Artists Music In The World Of Islam

MUSIC WORLD SERIES TCD901/902/903 CD

## Various Artists Vocal And Instrumental Music Of Mongolia

TOPIC WORLD SERIES TSCD909 CD

## Various Artists Folk Music Of Turkey

TOPIC WORLD SERIES TSCD908 CD

*Musik In The World Of Islam* finds the original half-dozen Topic albums recorded by Jean Jenkins and Paul Rovsing Olsen in the 1970s crammed (intact) onto three CDs. The collection was and is one of the first and most intriguingly consistent large international compilations ever to have appeared. Each volume is separated into different instrumental categories — voice, lutes, strings, flutes and trumpets, reeds and bagpipes, drums and rhythms — spanning an enormous variety of music and religious practice, including such far-flung outposts of Islamic influence as Italy, China and Indonesia. Anyone who's ever bungled a load of tunes onto a cassette for a friend (or paid £20 to hear a DJ play records you've already got) knows how mysterious the art of compilation is and how it can make or break a collection of material. Jean

Jenkins's selection from what must have been hundreds of hours of source material, often edited down to two or three minute fragments, is remarkably convincing and wholly absorbing. Each little piece from dozens of countries and genres somehow come together to form a very clear image of a music ultimately united both by deep senses of community and religious devotion and by the frailties and flexibility of the human voice. The magnificent volume dedicated to the human voice (here twinned with the lute selection) is one of the most sampled and plagiarised of all ethnographic materials, being the (credited) source for David Byrne and Brian Eno's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* among others. But it would be a great shame if this monumental set of recordings were only to be listened to with an ear

for exploitation, as it stands on its own as one of the most important collections of music ever made.

Jenkins was also responsible for the remarkable Mongolian collection which witnesses two LPs' worth of many varieties of vocal and instrumental music from this sonically unique region of the globe. Included are some bewildering examples of the now-familiar overtone singing and the less familiar, but no less bizarre 'milking improvisations' accompanied by yak, sheep and camels. There's also some uniquely beautiful communal singing sung by the audience at a game of skittles!

The Turkish collection from the same series is chiefly notable for Mehmet Alan's exceptionally delicate 180 bpm Black Sea fiddling, and the mysterious wedding music Sadi Temiz, whose thrilling, ecstatic zurna-oboe performance is pure trance music. John Coltrane longed for this kind of combination of tone, control and intensity on the soprano saxophone, but achieved it only rarely, and never with this kind of ease, simplicity and utter directness.

RICHARD SCOTT

### Mal Waldron & George Haslam Waldron-Haslam

SLAM 305 CD

### Enrico Pieranunzi/Enrico Rava Mausica

QUAQUORNIUM SCA 037 CD

### Keshavan Maslak/Katsuyuki Itakura

Excuse Me, Mr. Sate  
LEO LR199 CD

Reflection and restraint are the keynote in the first two of these piano and horn albums. On his own SLAM! label, British baritone saxophonist George Haslam gets together with Mal Waldron, the man typecast as *Billie Holiday's* last pianist, on a — for them — surprisingly mainstream set *Standards* ("I Got It Bad", Leonard Bernstein's "Somewhere" — you're

sure to recognise it — and "If I Were A Bell") mix with some freer tracks. There's even some 'jazzing the classics', a solo piano interpretation of "Brahms 3, Mvt 3". You wonder how Waldron gets away with it — indeed both players have a pared-down melodic style, and Haslam's beautifully tender playing sometimes recalls late-period Lester Young. A beguiling partnership.

Cool, lyrical, tinged with melancholy, sometimes elegiac, the duos by Rava and Pieranunzi are for the unusual but empathetic combination of piano and trumpet. The mood of *Nouscous* is deceptively understated. It turns out to be pianist Pieranunzi's finest album since the solo *Pavison Portraits*, though here he shares composer credits with his partner. For someone who told me he didn't like horns any more, Pieranunzi has done quite a few albums with horn players (Lee Konitz, Phil Woods, Art Farmer). Rava has credits with the likes of Steve Lacy, Abdullah Ibrahim and Gil Evans, he uniquely combines the melancholy of Miles Davis with some gorgeous rich tones. Together, piano and horn capture the ethos of the Italian Quatuorvino label, which aims at "the recovery of the Mediterranean cultural tradition". But then that's an aspiration which the best of Italian jazz, in its special reflective lyricism, has always embodied.

Restraint and reflection are a refrain if not the keynote on *Excuse Me, Mr. Sate*. Interpretations of the proto-modernist's haunting little piano pieces alternate with free improvisations which take them as a starting-point. "Before I compose a piece, I walk round it several times, accompanied by myself," Sate claimed. So it didn't need his sister Olga to tell us that the French avant-gardist "was always difficult to understand. He doesn't seem to have been quite normal." Keshavan Maslak's perambulations round Sate's pieces are accompanied by pianist Itakura, and I doubt if the saxophonist is quite normal either. *Excuse Me, Mr. Sate* adds to Sate's famous set of *Grossesvennes* and the less well-known *Le Pege De Meuse* — "all the absurd non-jazz elements that I

passionately could think of at the moment," Keshavan says. Crazy, fun, and, on a couple of tracks, strangely moving. Sate would have smiled, I think.

ANDY HAMILTON

## in brief club trax

### Kodwo Eshun decodes December's dancehall deliveries

**A Guy Called Gerald**  
*Finley's Rainbow* (JUCEBOX JBOX 23 12) *I want you to know right now that I'm a rainbow* — sung as if the vocalist has turned distractedly away from the mic, has looked out the window and seen anything but a rainbow, the pitch of distanced, off-centre melancholy against whippet-swift breaks and agit-strings becomes something utterly fugitive, a shadow twisting away from its host melody. A glinting, glancing, dancing hint of Gerald's forthcoming *Black Secret Technology* album.

**DJ Krust Jazz Note/Burning**  
(V RECORDS V006 12) Ex-Fresh Four DJ and Roni Size collaborator solos brilliantly into an Ambient fusion interzone where micro-melody (last year's thing) secedes to atmospherics (this year's thing). "Jazz Note" is sudden mirages, muted clouds of brass that obscure the sync-breaks and then lift and clear. "Burning", however, is something else again over an ambuscade of spastic, splintered snares, a formless haze of 'Oriental' synth vapour lowers and then plunges. Woodwinds circle, dip and uddle as choppy waves of percussion bank, pause and crash down like Big Wednesday. Post-oceanic, cyclonic cba-jazz. [Whoa! This month's Category: Of The Month Award Winner — Ed.]

**DJ Solo & DJ Rossie Inna Strength/Sureshot** (V RECORDS VBOX2 12) The thrills, curlicues, heaves and involutions of Jungle's fractalization of the breakbeat constitute a rhythmic baroque that is the other side of the music's

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martinet austerity ("Inna Strength", all flourish and recoil, twinkle and elaboration, plays on the first side of this oscillation "Sureshot" is sandpaper abrasion, shot through with revelatory tumbling strings, is another example of the way fragility nests within severity in the music

### Far Out Son Of Lung Ramblings Of A Madman

(SMOKING JAPANESE BARE PROMO 12) In which The Future Sound Of London reinvent themselves as astro-rap, gleefully wrecking the pristine contours of their last work via muted trumpet that sobbles Twomblyesque cloud trails over randomly streamer scraps and snatches of wiseguy patter, jazz detritus and broken down bass lines. Unstable, even volatile, it's their best for ages

**Fila Brazilia Slacker** (PORK PRODUCTIONS PROMO 12) "Slacker" is a slow winding coil of harmonium synth, a barely beating pulse rate of near-death ambience, while the second B-side track, "Subtle Body", is barely there at all, the merest, most delicate flatline tremor of piano. Austere and intimate solipsism from an underrated group

**Firefox & 4-Tree Warning** (PHILLY BLUNT PB 002 12) Plucking the lovingly wistful a capella chorus out of Junior Tucker's "Warning" and resetting it in a pocket, pitted ragascape, Roni Size (in another guise) exchanges his now classic cascades of rippling pizzicato for a barbed twirle of flesh-forwards and chopped, phase-punched breaks. Less avant and more friendly than usual, it still won't see him anywhere near the charts

**Jo Apollo 9/Murder** (AWESOME RECORDS SLO 25 12) Imagine an automatic harpsichord or a player-piano driven by eight Mb of RAM that's gone haywire and scored itself for *Aliens*. That was Jo's signature sound on her last classic single "R-Type". Here, the measured countdown to takeoff on "Apollo 9" is derailed by the tumbling nose-dive of those synths which is then repeated and

repeated like a catastrophe on playback. "Murder" straps a stringently vicious guitar whiplash onto the most ferociously galloping bass, like a riff from Mountain or Cream that's gone hysterical. **AWOL**, beyond rescue

### 3rd Party Screwface Part Two/Part Three

(XETMET RECORDS 3RD 10 12) "Part Two" (the hardcore mix) recombines the keening death knell of the original mix as a fearlessly martial warzone of scudding snares and lethal strikes. "Part Three" (the mellow mix) wheezes like an instant camera set at maximum aperture, teeming apart its badboy throwdown like a shredded Zepelin. More epic than *The Odyssey*

## in brief **electronica**

**Rob Young listens to music machines operating close to the edge**

**The Auteurs Vs  $\mu$ -Zig**  
**The Auteurs Vs  $\mu$ -Zig** (JUT 839 973 CD) EP The Auteurs happen to be a group I particularly dislike, so it's surprising that they should be in any way associated with this excellent disc. They hardly are though — that 'Vs' is a token gesture.  $\mu$ -Zig's touchstone is the celebration of the crude. Mike Paradinas doesn't reconstruct the tracks from within, but takes the originals as if from an image bank, using them as a background canvas and daubing them with bellows-beats, spreading them with keyboard cheese. The indelicate act of a true music lover. Significant point: no track listing on this record

**Global Communication Maiden Voyage** (DEDICATED GLOBAL 001 CD 12) **The Ecstasy Of Saint Theresa AstralVista** (FREE RECORD 8 CD 12) The GlobalComm EP comes in two parts — aim for the one with the Link/E621 remix of "739", in which the original is shivered into hundreds of claustro-funk nodules. Despite repeated "Electronica as the new jazz" claims of late,

"Maiden Voyage" seems a pretty backward namecheck for an operation that in many ways points to future methods of self-reliance through connectivity. Multi-artist remix projects like this can be as psychologically revealing as blot therapy. Michael Brook slows it down, tussling and holding with a few isolated concrete textures. The Grid paves it with slick beats, and only Spinalised get properly stuck in, speeding it up and coating it with militant snare, saw-streams, whispered words

EOST's "AstralVista" EP is an interim report, until Prague-based Ambient nose-scaper Jan Muchow produces promised new material, these four remixes will have to suffice. His own rehash of "Vacuum Blow" is a Tangerine Nightmare, but Disco Inferno and Bandulu know how to play God, and each brilliantly restructure the music in their own image. I'm getting into this idea of the remix as complete redo from scratch (discolouration of the blueprint), anything less is just names to puff trash. Imagine what a remixer John Cage would have made if he'd hung on a little longer

**LFO Tied Up** (HAWK WAP 56 CD 12) Good to hear LFO finding alternative ways to remain rigorous. Third mix is way best, fizzling like some silicon sadist trying to short out a 70s Moog bass, the fourth blanks out the softporn sample refrain altogether with a steaming hard, crescent 4/4. This whole EP hums with tension — in a rare fit of mercy LFO let the machines breathe between bouts of choking the life out of them, which was what they were always best at

**Anthony Manning kiets in Pink Polypropylene** (IRIAL 54 110 AEV 2 CD) **Jimi Tenor Sähköies** (PUL 1 LP) Two marginal geniuses. It's a real tragedy that a spirit such as Anthony Manning's should be under the wing of Alon Fernandez's Irial imprint — the word is wisely chosen, for much as they claim to represent a site for unfettered creativity, the Irial Gestalt is stamped hard over all their activities, releases and press coverage. Nevertheless, this is astonishing music, a liquidity

headbox of aural shapes, whose forms hardly change yet seem to encompass infinite viscosity within them, like rainbow pools of oil on water. Jimi Tenor is a Finn living in New York who looks like he thinks Warhol's Factory still exists, if only someone would give him directions. Sähköies is like Sun Ra at his noodliest, trying out a new synth in a corner of a hotel lobby. He even has a croon at "Travelin' Dem Spaceways", which works, for the sheer absurdity of trying

**Orang Spoor** (TECHO ECSD 6 CD 12) **Main Ugitare** (BEGGARS BANQUET 12) Despite an awesome debut album Orang still haven't ventured out of their creative biosphere, but they're breeding some strange lifeforms in there. "Nhojek" makes ritualistic use of a drum machine, but the way they record is more indebted to Ocora field recordings of rites and celebrants — check "Core" on the CD, a percussion jam like the casting of a protective spell

Man is just there, now, as their forthcoming *Firmament* album demonstrates, you don't hear their music any more, or rather, you hear it all the time if you live or work in a large conurbation. Again, ideal as a trace texture for other sound shapers, it's liquid concrete for remixers to leave their prints. Paul Kendall extracts rhythm from a burst of gutters, Paul Schütze sketches out a variety of intriguing shapes and colours of his own design. Jim O'Rourke looks deep into the mix, magnifying tiny reflections and chain reactions occurring behind the immediate strata of noise. Difficult to imagine Man going even further out, but you can bet they'll be trying

**Various Artists Distant Music** (UNITES UNIC 1 CD) **Various Artists Experiments** (A13 AAO01 CD) **Trax Beyond Subconscious Ambient Cut-Outs Vol 1** (LABWORKS LABUCD 003) To survive, Techno needs to keep as mobile and mobilised as it can, as fluid and nomadic as its component parts ought to allow. Instead, it's in danger of freezing into purism, into hardware fetishism, into the

*Rolywholyover, A Circus* is an extraordinary metal box, prepared by the late John Cage himself. It contains a panoply of materials, from writings to musical scores, which are printed in different formats and on translucent paper so they can be read randomly in wondrous juxtapositions.

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assumption that we all want our memories to become live seconds long, like goldfish. Finland's Sähkö organisation have exactly the right idea — Untunes is another subdivision set up with the Dum label to compile the best Finnish Electronica. So far, almost everything that's trickled from this source has been outstanding, and *Distant Music* is one hell of a place to start. It remains the paradigm — their "Kosmos" harnesses the peak levels of oscillators, extending the waveforms to their absolute elastic limit — and Aural Expansion's "Vacuum Sucker" is even better, like a radio transmission from a planet long since dead. The link with A13's beautifully packaged *Experimento* collection is Mono Junk, another Sähkö crew member. We're in dryer, lipotchno territory here. MU's "Another A13" is more high-concentrate attention to detail. Kinesthesia's "Speng II" is remorselessly intricate. Edge Of Motion's "Memories Of The Future" a 13 minute laid back massage. Most of the rest have shorter half-lives, but it's a promising start for the Essex A13 label. *Trax Beyond Subconscious* are over-ambitious allowing themselves admirable space and duration but unable to resist the temptation to fill the background with watercolour when what's needed is oil.

## outline classical

**Ben Watson brings the classical world to its knees**

European art music could be defined as concrete philosophy, the search for a non-verbal, sensual attitude towards the world, one which feels 'right' or 'true'. Magazines dedicated to classical music tend to take the word 'classic' literally, elevating scores beyond criticism. Reviews are reduced to judgements on the technical means of reproduction: a conductor's tempo, the skill of the players, the engineer's placement of microphones. The compositions themselves are all products of 'genius', guaranteed 'testaments to the human spirit'.

Such criticism is nonplussed by



works that haven't been admitted to the canon (ie anything written this century). Whether you take this to be an indication of something wrong with society (Theodor Adorno) or a perverse 'creepiness' on the part of composers (Steve Reich), modern classical music is inevitably controversial.

Deutsche Grammophon spur one to think about history by yoking together Alfred Schnittke, Witold Lutoslawski and György Ligeti on one CD (Classicon 100 439452). Schnittke's reputation was established in this country in 1990, when, to celebrate Glasnost, a brace of Russians were presented under the slogan "The Curtain Rises". Schnittke's 'polytyslism' — baroque, romantic and modernist modes all mixed together — was applauded for its populism and accessibility. Now, as the dust settles, Pierre Boulez's comment — that, deprived of contact with the global mainstream because of the Iron Curtain, Russians were bound to write parochial music — seems more apt. Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso #1* (1977) seems particularly weak, his jokes and 'irony' unable to hide an inability to make his orchestral sounds evolve. By contrast, Ennio Morricone's ironic use of baroque arrives from avant garde research into echo and sonics, it is not just a matter of cranking out pastiche Vivaldi. Schnittke's cracked bells and wistful violins are naively manipulative, compared to Lutoslawski, his orchestral palette is meagre indeed. The latter's *Choir Three* (1986) and *Nocturne* (1979) — while unashamedly romantic — keep pushing the orchestra into unprecedented new zones of texture.

Ligeti's *Chamber Concerto* (1970), performed by Boulez and his Ensemble InterContemporain, leaps out of the classical sound-world with effects that could almost be electronic. His special ability to score streaming, horizontal textures puts one in mind of crystals, astral lights, seams in the earth's crust. Whereas Lutoslawski achieves authentic expression within the terms set by romanticism, Ligeti abandons the heaving of the human heart for something objective, thereby connecting to *musique*

concrete (Schaeffer, Boehmer), avant garde jazz (Abrams, Braxton, Threadgill) and free improvisation. Actually, Ligeti is a poet of those most human attributes: curiosity about the external world, and desire to transform it. It's the most significant piece of music among these discs.

Lutoslawski's third and fourth symphonies are also available, with a setting of a (wonderful) surrealist poem by Robert Desnos, on a new Sony release (SK 66280). 2D-bit technology helps The LA Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen sound terrific. Lutoslawski's pining of effects — cello stomach rumbles, percussive palpitations, nervousities of high strings — gains coherence via grounded, in-the-body physicality, rather than formal/academic correctness. Someone on top of his tradition rather than sunk in it.

Toru Takemitsu seems to have abandoned the experimental intensity of his 60s/70s music in favour of a role as 'Japan's greatest composer'. As with Morricone, work on films (some classic, Kurosawas, for example) alerted him to timbre, and some of his East-West fusions are stunning. On the new *Centos CD* (RCA/Victor D9Q26 62537), Waves (1977) and *Water-Ways* (1978) are beautiful mood studies, filigrees of held notes, overlapping tensions and eruptive surprises. Naturalistic elements — drums as thunder — derive from filmic practice, impressionism detailed enough to make most New Age/Ambient sound crude. But mark the dead hand of academia: *Fontasma/Cantos* (1991) may nod to Duke Ellingtonian lushness, but it's way too conventional to justify its length.

Probably the only English composer to measure up to Lutoslawski for his combination of integrity and mainstream success is Harrison Birtwistle. His *Antiphones For Piano And Orchestra* (Collins Classics 14 142) was written for the pianist Joanna MacGregor. She's ideal for Birtwistle, her touch waxy, her structural command chillingly assured. Birtwistle's orchestral palette derives from Edgard Varèse, all martial horns, heratic percussion and harsh strings. It's rather strident and ungiving for the living room, at first

**Hut:** through Virgin

**Dedicated:** through BMG

**Free:** through Go! Discs/Polygram

**Irdial, Eva:** through These

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**Echo:** through Chrysalis/EMI

**A13:** through Vital

**Labworks:** through RTM/Pinnacle

**Deutsche Grammophon, Decca:** through Polygram

**New Albion:** through Impetus

you feel that maybe he could have learned from Varèse's brevity too. There is a typically English 'mythological' feel to Birtwistle, reminiscent of the bronzed, Henry Moore-like structures favoured by opera set designers. It's worth working at, though his multi-faceted constructions are impressive, if not revelatory. Whereas Boulez takes Messiaen's sound world into delirious slithers, Birtwistle is epic and sturdy (the disc also includes new recordings of *Normas* and *Imaginary Landscape*). Steve Reich may call it 'creepy', but serialism is just composition intoxicated with possibility.

That is also the claim made for Charles Ives, the 'father of American music'. On *A Set Of Pieces* (Deutsche Grammophon 439 869), which includes *Three Places In New England*, *The Unanswered Question*, *A Set Of Pieces*, *Symphony #3* and *Set #1*, The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra play accurately but without free. Individual players like Joanna MacGregor and Bill Friesel, modernists with a feel for discord and the blues, can make an Ives sonata sound like a vital jumble of Americana, orchestras reduce his contrasts to pale patriotic soup, cowboy film inanity. Coupling Ives' *Symphony #4* with Edgar Varèse's *Amenosus* (Decca 443 172) might seem a good idea, but unfortunately Christoph Von Dohnanyi and The Cleveland Orchestra reduce Varèse's futurism to Ivesian pastoral: this has none of the power and shock of Mahler. Constant's performance for the Erato label.

A different America emerges on John Cage's *Sixteen Dances* (RCA/Victor 09026 61574), written for dancer Merce Cunningham in 1951, here performed by The Ensemble Modern under Ingo Metzger. Flute, trumpet, piano, violin, cello and percussion are suspended in pregnant silence. Organisation is rhythmic, unpredictable variations create ever changing shapes. Where things become denser (eg 'Dance #81') there is something Stravinsky-like about the static rhythms. Although the dances are named after the eight 'permanent emotions' of Hindu aesthetics, the

lasting impression is of Cage's quietism. Both recording and playing are lush and beautiful, making the asceticism of the scores — the fact that we're being made to pay attention to the spaces between the sounds rather than the sounds themselves — still more poignant.

Still keeping faith with an idea of modernist music as innovative and politically alert is Alvin Curran with *Crisol Patterns* (New Albion NA 16 CD), an oratorio for the victims of the Nazi pogrom of 1938, performed and broadcast simultaneously in six different nations half a century later. This wasn't just a stunt: there are moments of difficulty and non-communication that make the overall flow still more moving. Like the radio-plays (*Horst Wessel*) which Heiner Goebbels releases on ECM, it integrates all kinds of disparate materials with a keen ear for continuity.

However, both collage methodology and subject matter beg comparison to John Zorn's *Kristallnacht* (Eva WWCX 2050), drawing Curran few favours. In contrast to Zorn's state of the art, hair-on-end aural shocks, Curran's deployment of national radio choirs seems ineffectual, helplessly respectable. Will establishment prayer repel Nazi attacks, or the ability to think the unthinkable? Effective anti-fascism (I would argue) requires the latter.

Interesting, too, to compare Schnittke's use of angst/viol violin to Zorn's, both evoke middle European facility with the instrument, but Zorn uses a player who can improvise (Mark Feldman), and records him with hallucinogenically in-focus precision. Musical forms are pushed to their limit rather than just quoted (Zorn can even make gesture! Marc Ribot play with vervet!) Both politically and aesthetically, Zorn is light-years ahead of the rest; but then he should be, because, since Frank Zappa's death, he has become our finest 'classical' composer in other words, he indicates the emotional resources to face the horrors of the contemporary world, to situate the self vis-à-vis the social totality. □

## Bitches Brew *Continued from page 26*

For a brief period a number of the musicians who had been members of Davis's groups attempted to follow in the direction that *Bitches Brew* charted. Herbie Hancock's *Sextant* used many Davis devices and forged their own distinctive sound. *Sextant*, their first album for Columbia, is a remarkable achievement, comparable in its teeming, proto-Fourth World soundscapes to *Agharta* or *Big Fun*. However, the album sold poorly and Hancock broke up *Sextant* to form the group which recorded *Headhunters*, the first million selling 'jazz' album. Former *Sextant* members Eddie Henderson, Bernie Maupin and Julien Priester went on to record albums that carried forth many of the ideas posited on *Sextant*, again, these albums received minimal sales.

The early music of Weather Report, featuring Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul, owed much to Davis's innovations. Their live format used set-long medleys and their cryptic credo of 'we always solo, we never solo' reflected the process philosophy of Davis's music. Again, after a number of years of minimal sales and success, the band had a massive hit with 'Birdland'. This success dictated the approach the group would subsequently take — an approach which would become a paradigm for the nascent fusion genre, valouring ego, virtuosic (and often meaningless) displays of individual musicianship within highly organised and arranged compositions.

Although many of Davis's former musicians were unsparing with praise for their old mentor, their music reflected a regression, rather than a progression, from his music. John McLaughlin's *Mahavishnu Orchestra*, Chick Corea's *Return To Forever* and Hancock's aforementioned *Headhunters* were all Romantic, musically conservative units. All three groups were tightly controlled by their leaders and all offered exercises in predictability in their studio and stage performances. The early promise of jazz rock — that electronics, ethnic influences and rock rhythms could expand the sonic and textural matrix of jazz — degenerated into the vapidity of fusion. The *Headhunters* and *Mahavishnu* sold out basketball arenas and regularly outsold Davis's own records. And in an irony that Davis downplays in his autobiography, he ended up as the opening act on a *Headhunters* tour of the mid-70s.

**The influence of *Bitches Brew* seems** to have had its greatest impact in the amorphous spaces of avant rock. Both Jon Hassell (see page 28) and Brian Eno have noted their debt to Davis's music of the period. In the sleeve notes to his 1982 album *On Land* (a record which has become a virtual template for the current wave of Ambient music experimentalists), Eno cited Teo Macero's 'revolutionary production' on 'He Loved Him Madly' (off *Get Up With It*) as a touchstone for his own explorations into the nature of recorded sound. Recent recordings by Bill Laswell and Laswell's long-time associate, guitarist Nicky Skopelites, draw heavily on the tribal perspectives of *Bitches Brew* — even their covers resemble Mati Klarwein's spooky art (in fact, Klarwein has done the cover art for some of the releases on Laswell's new Black Arc label). Meanwhile, in the UK, groups such as God, Orang and others are using Davis's 70s recordings to contextualise their own music's ritualistic, modern-primitive qualities.

So what makes *Bitches Brew* still sound so vital and so unstuck in time? One of the best descriptions I have found is by Mati Klarwein, a friend of Davis in that period as well as the album's cover artist. 'It is the music of the world, not African, nor Afro-American nor any other continent. It is the entire globe pulsating in my brain'. □

*Bitches Brew* is available on Sony/Columbia

**Bill Laswell** *Continued from page 35*

We did that for like an hour and then I said, "We got it." He's like, "OK, I think I'm ready." And I said, "No, we shouldn't mess with that. That was really good."

The third Pankiller album — *Execution Ground* — reworks loud live performances by the trio into studio processed volcanic landscapes. "I was kinda stressing that I didn't think it was possible for me, to be interested in music that people played anymore. That if five people came into a room, knowing their influences, knowing their backgrounds, knowing maybe what they had for dinner, it's not interesting. It's been done a million times. I thought maybe if you change that even slightly, then I would be interested, whether by processing it, whether it was by killing one of the guys while they were playing. Anything, but just make it different. Find another way to determine a creation of something."

The eternal drift at "Lizard Point." For one whole summer in New York City, Laswell worked with Brian Eno on material that would be edited and processed into a part of *On Land*. "One by one he fired everybody and it was just me and him. We would go to Canal Street and we'd buy junk — those hoses you twirl around and gravel, put it in a box and put verbi on it. All these weird things to make sounds. We'd be in this bathroom with these overhead mikes, making sounds for days. A friend of mine was a photographer from Chile [Felipe Orrego]. He got these tapes of frogs and the frogs sounded like an orchestra. There was like thousands of them but they had it totally hooked up. Occasionally one would start a riff — it's like Monkey Chain where one voice will start and the rest will jump in. Eno really was into that tape and that's all over that record."

The black night and whooping sounds of alarm On the morning of Sonny Sharrock's funeral, Bill Laswell and Pharoah Sanders boarded a plane for Morocco. After *Gnawa Music Of Marrakesh: Night Spirit Masters*, archival recordings of Morocco's trance music brotherhoods, comes *The Trance Of Seven Colors*, by Gnawa master Maleem Mahmoud Ghania with Pharoah Sanders.

"Mahmoud Ghania is really strong. It's also a guy I always tried to get to and people would always say, 'No, you don't wanna mess with those guys.' Finally, I had a connection in Canada with a guy who had lived in Essaouira and he said he could make that connection with this guy. When I went to Marrakesh I bought all of his cassettes — he had made about 30 of them. It was the heaviest bass stuff. I would always say, 'What about this guy?' No, you don't want them. They're doing something bad. It's evil. It's the dark side. But this guy had the connection and we went and met his family and his father, who was about seventy-something and was still alive.

"Basically, they came from Guinea, which means all that sintir [gumbi] playing is rooted in doussou ngoun playing. But in that Gnawa, they play seven trances, seven styles of playing songs, and dances and narration, colour and scent, seven times go into seven sections. And of those seven sections of colour, one is black. In the black it's very heavy. People can do performances where people crawl inside of a skin, a bag, and as they play, that person can decide if they wanna live or if they wanna give themselves to that music. And it's sad with that music, they can lift them into a better way of living. They can also take them out.

"There's also mutilation. Like his mother was an adept who would take a spear or sword, somehow stick it through her, and they swallow needles and shit like this. It's like in Brazil, Bahia, people do that, and drink boiling stuff and just go out, completely outside. His sister, I think, is learning that way even now. The mother died. She was very scary. That's why, when you mention that with people about the real thing — they don't want to risk being around the real thing. That's heavy. You'll hear it in the way he hits his strings.

"I wanted to bring something from our end of it which I thought would be a spiritual contribution, which is Pharoah's presence. I think when we got there everybody was suspicious. These Gnawa don't like jazz. To them, it's confused music so the guy came to Pharoah and said, 'I'm a little worried that the master doesn't like jazz.' And Pharoah said, 'I don't play jazz. I'm playing avant garde.' And the guy said, 'OK, I guess that'll be fine.' I was not encouraging him to play crazy. I thought it was more about the experience of hearing that music. I said, if you want to bring a phrase, maybe everybody can play, they're all playing repetitive cycles on layers of phrases. He played this riff and I said, that's cool, where'd you get that? He said, 'I think I learned this when I was a kid from the Seminole Indians.' It sounded good, and then they started playing the same riff without discussing it. Then they had a vocal already prepared for it. When he stopped he said, 'How you guys know that stuff like that?' And they said, 'This is the name of that song' and this song is like 2000 years old.

Trance and the funk "Playing stable phrases with feeling and every time you play a cycle it's as important as the first cycle you play. Same with dub. I could listen to one bass line for years. To me, it's all different. Somebody say, 'No, this is a loop, it's all the same.' It's not the same.

"I think it's always been there, any time we're doing repetitive music, that quality is there. I think it's a real force and it's a thing that can get into a dimension that we're not aware of how to navigate inside of, but we all bring that to sound, on different degrees or levels. We all have that. Inside of that, if you have any kind of power, it's laying in there. And this kind of repetitive thing, call it trance or call it whatever, can be inside of that without realising you've changed spaces. I think that's a real thing and very few people have experienced what it feels like to go into a trance while experiencing music. We don't get to do that with the kind of music we hear.

"In *Joujouka (After) Apocalypse Across The Sky: The Master Musicians Of Joujouka, Almor* it happened to me twice and I realised what the feeling was. It's like if you're in this chair and you lean back a little too far and you catch yourself. That's when you're flipping into it. I've seen people possessed by it, by listening to that music in Marrakesh. I know what the feeling is now and I know how powerful it can be and I know it has nothing to do with the experience that we're getting from listening or what people are saying about trance. They're way off. Like this woman who did this thing with the spear — that's like complete removal. That's like the real thing.

"Yeah, the eye goes up. I've seen that in sanctified churches, like circus tents in the South. I used to play in churches. My friend was an organ player in a black church and we would play in a rhythm and blues band. I would go on a Sunday when there was no bass player and I would play in this church. People would lose it completely in exactly the same way — not as intense or aggressive as the experience with these Gnawa — but they would go somewhere else. And that's the real magic.

"There's mutilation ceremonies where people are so far in trance that they play rhythms with really sharp knives all over themselves. They don't feel anything. Then they'll just fall out and the next day they'll be fine. In some cases they'll be hardly even scarred. That's got everything to do with something we don't know about and rightfully so. Those things you can't know.

"That's the energy and the mystery and the power of it. You can't know that. That's why it's worth being there. That's why it's worth pursuing. That's why it's all possible. The rest of it is just already figured out and already been done and you're just rearranging the words so that it can fit the occasion."

Both shivering now, we go inside





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# letters

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## Digital debate

Re Akin Fernandez's glandular, distortive and wrong-headed attack on digital media (*Naked Eye*, *The Wire* 129). As a small label pursuing the "insane policy of CD-only releases", we would like to take issue with Mr Fernandez.

He writes of the potential loss of "whole sections of the history of music permanently", yet the greatest single failure of a storage medium he offers is that of analogue tape in the 1970s, while conveniently neglecting the release of obscure and long-deleted material due to the arrival of the CD. Agreed, DAT and CD have limitations, at present the 44.1 KHz sampling rate limits the dynamic range to around 90 dB (as opposed to the 67-70 dB of vinyl) — if used with a perfect stylus and correctly-balanced tone arm on a virgin slice of vinyl fresh from its shrink wrap, before surface friction begins to take its toll! It is an inherent limitation of all reproductive materials that, as with musicians, they ultimately decay, yet Fernandez seems to subscribe to a vinyl fetishism of record collectors more concerned with viewing shelves of 12" plastic than experiencing moments of clear musical connection.

We live in a world fuelled and shaken by technological change, and yes, the history books (or discs) of the future will hopefully question the morality of the commercial interests which drive that change, but criticisms of DAT apply at least

equally to all magnetic tapes — it is a fundamental property of all glues that they lose their adhesion and of all magnetic fields to disperse. We challenge Mr Fernandez to find two analogue tape decks which have azimuth alignment and tape path compatibility to within a few tenths of a millimetre. Perhaps Mr Fernandez would be kind enough to let us see the specifications of the "Molecular Resolution Recording" he speaks of, particularly in view of the fact that the majority of UK studios put the final mix direct to DAT prior to the cutting process, meaning that before the possibility of any "molecular" resolution the recording is already subject to the 44.1 or 48 KHz sampling rate limitations — even without taking into account the effects of digital reverbs and other signal processing — again stamping the recording with aliased 'steps'.

As a label producing material with a considerable dynamic range, we find vinyl simply obscures detail beneath surface noise, pops, crackles, scratches, lost further by every single play as the plastic is worn away by contact with the stylus. Our use of the 3-D sound imaging system, surely a feature which can add to the listening experience, again makes vinyl a poor choice, due to the limitations of the cutting process making special manipulation of low frequencies unobtainable. Ultimately, no recording can totally duplicate the experience of being at the original session and it seems unlikely any recording ever will. Desperately exaggerating the

limitations of the CD does not miraculously raise the fidelity of vinyl, or extend its suitability to all forms of music. Mr Fernandez's role as "administrator" of the "Molecular Resolution" technology and his Luddite isolationism is no less suspect than the notion of Philips developing CDs purely out of some noble pursuit of fidelity.  
**Chris Allen and David Thompson, Time Recordings, Nottingham**

If *The Wire* can be said to have a Unique Selling Point, in a time when it feels like a new music magazine appears on the streets every week, it must be that it constantly delivers music journalism of the highest quality on types of music that most other magazines leave behind. In this respect, Akin Fernandez's article on the tyranny of CDs and DAT was a typical *Wire* article — sharp and well-written, cohesive, forthright and covering a subject that few other magazines would (dare?) give space to. The article differed from other *Wire* articles in one significant respect, however: its content was full of shit.

Fernandez mentions the manufacturing error that occurred in the mid-70s at Ampex which resulted in the sudden deterioration of thousands of analogue master tapes. Conveniently, he then omits to mention that once Ampex discovered this error they instigated a FREE service (for artists, record companies,

recording studios and so on) whereby they would transfer music that was mastered onto tapes that were manufactured at the time (and whether they had deteriorated or not) onto new, guaranteed tapes.

Fernandez also complains that DAT tapes are unreliable, and are fussy about which machines they will play on. For someone who runs a record label, this demonstrates an unbelievable level of ignorance regarding DAT technology. All DAT tapes are formatted, and just like computer floppy discs, they can be formatted in different ways. And just as a computer floppy disc that has been formatted to i86/PC specifications won't be compatible with an Apple Macintosh hard drive (unless it is first put through a software conversion programme) so a DAT tape that has been formatted on one machine won't play back on a machine that requires a different type of formatting.

I could go on and list the many other errors that crop up in Fernandez's article (such as his blinkered belief in the idea — the myth — that CDs have a ten year life span), but why bother? I wonder why Fernandez wrote the article in the first place, when his knowledge of the subject was so obviously impoverished? Could it have something to do with the fact that it would get him some free advertising for his own record label's "Molecular Resolution Recording" system?

**James Alexander, Leominster**

## next month

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